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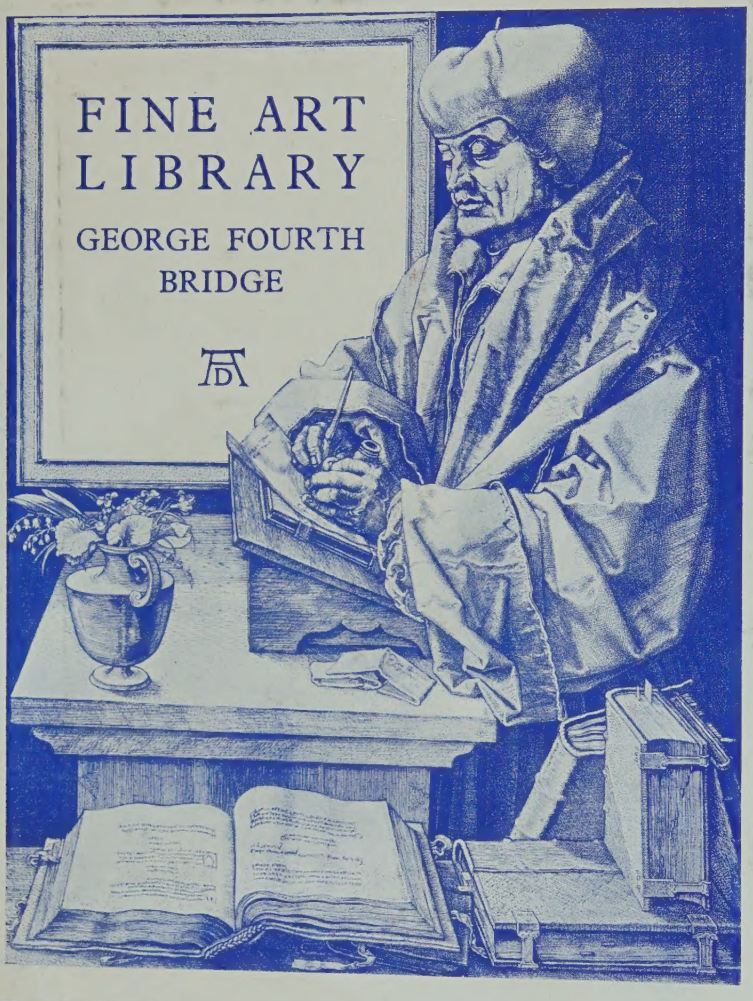

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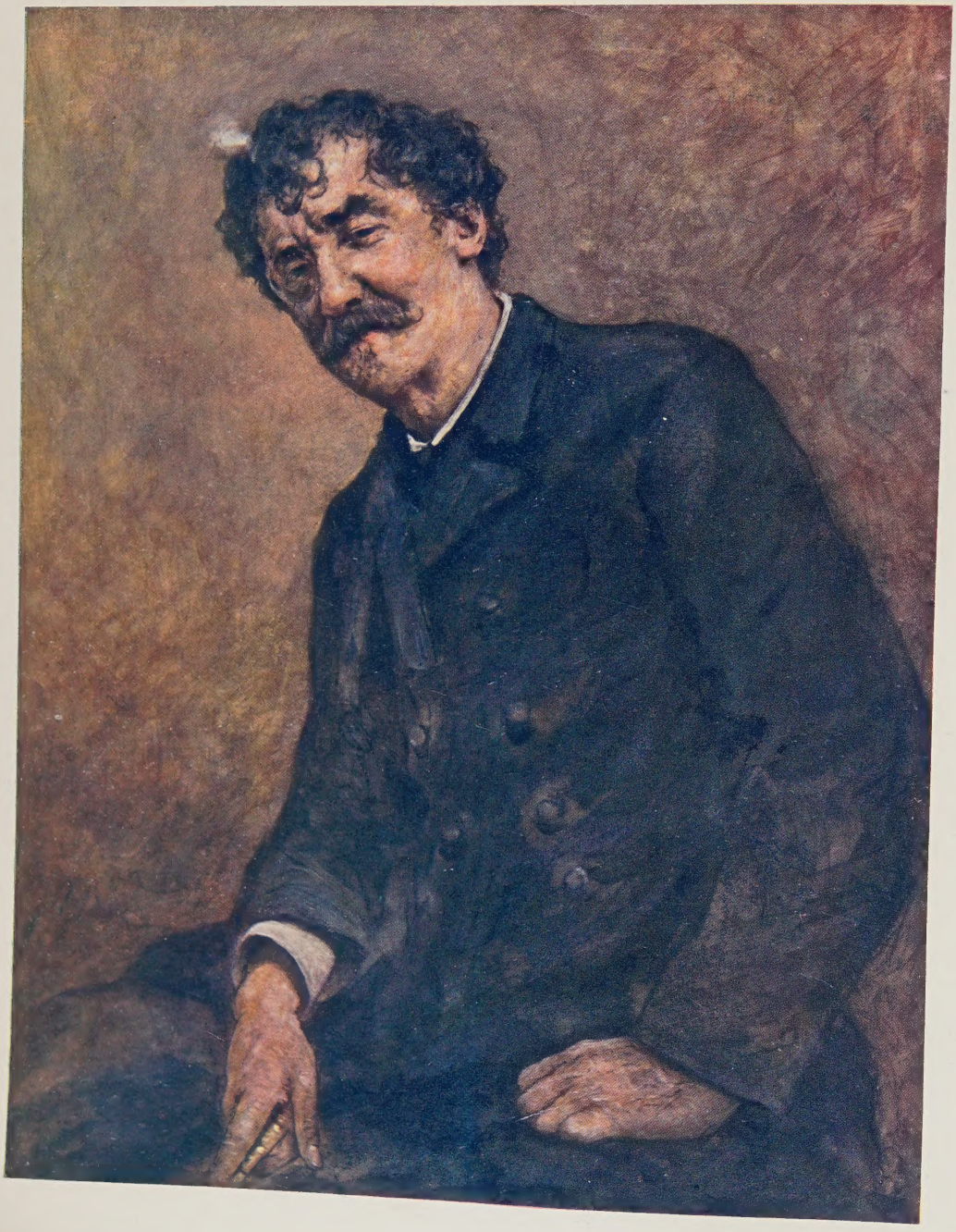

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JAMES M'NEILL WHISTLER

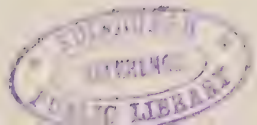
By Mortimer Menpes.

WHISTLER AS I KNEW HIM

BY

MORTIMER MENPES

LONDON
ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK
1904



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INTRODUCTORY

INTRODUCTORY

WHISTLER THE EXAGGERATED

THE cry of Whistler's life was, "Save me from my friends!" If only he could hear them now, the cry, I feel sure, would be still more terrible. The understudies fall sadly short. His friends are foolishly, though no doubt all unwittingly, raising up a cloud behind which the real Whistler is obscured, and I feel that it is only fair to his memory to try and cleanse the atmosphere that is gathering round about him. For example, how ridiculous are the letters which one reads nowadays in the papers concerning Whistler's aversion from the Royal Academy? They say that Whistler would not care to have his work exhibited either at the National Gallery or at the Royal Academy; they almost go the length of saying that he would object to his pictures even being bought in England. That is absolutely ridiculous. It is false. I knew Whistler, not toward the end of his life, but at his best and strongest period, when he was doing his finest work. I refer to the time of the "Sarasate," the "Mother," and the "Carlyle." I know for a fact that not only would Whistler have allowed it, but also that he would have looked upon it as the greatest privilege, to have been made an Associate of the Royal

mistakes, and Whistler was ever the first to admit his failings. No man knew his limitations better than he, and that, I often think, was one great reason why he succeeded so well.

I have heard people say that Whistler never copied anyone, that he was absolutely original in everything he did. I have heard men talk of Mr. Chase, the well-known portrait-painter, and say, "Isn't it absurd of Chase to try and copy the Master's straight-brimmed hat?" Now, I happen to know that Chase never copied Whistler's hat; and, to prove my statement, reproduce in this book a photograph of Whistler, Chase, and myself. There it will be seen that Whistler is wearing the curly hat, and Chase the straight-brimmed hat. When Whistler first caught sight of Chase, he said, "Ha, ha! what have we here? This is good! I like the lines of this hat!" And in less than a week Whistler blossomed out in the straight-brimmed hat of Chase.

The people who talk so glibly of Whistler never having copied anyone do not understand how great an artist he was. When the Master saw a good thing he accepted it. For example, the title of his book, "The Gentle Art of Making Enemies," was not Whistler's idea. Someone else designed it, and he adopted it immediately as a good thing. Now, this same book, pungent and epigrammatic as it is, is not sufficient in itself to justify a too enthusiastic friend's

was quite aware, had done no real wrong, and the Master himself was not bitter against them. Simply he looked upon these different men as so much material to be used, and, friends or foes, he fought against them all. The writing of these letters was a great joy to him. He loved nothing better, and never missed an opportunity of penning one of his famous epistles. Often I was with Whistler at the moment when he thought of a brilliant phrase. We might be in a hansom cab or at a Soho restaurant, and he would say, after telling the then latest quips, "Now, who shall I tack it on to, Menpes?" If an opportunity did not occur, he very soon made one by writing a letter which called for answer. All his friends at that period delighted in this curious twist in his character. None of us for a moment thought of taking him seriously. He attacked me over and over again by letter; but I did not resent it. I had never harmed Whistler, — in fact, I always looked upon it as a privilege to help him in any way I could; — yet he wrote to me letters full of stinging wit and sarcasm, letters in which he called me the "Kangaroo of his country, born with a pocket and putting everything into it." But Whistler forgave me afterwards. The moment he met me again he began to roar with laughter, and treated the whole affair as a huge joke. I, too, treated it as a joke. I knew that "the Kangaroo" was too good a simile to be missed by Whis-

tler, and I appreciated his wit. He fired off his sallies on me; and that was all right, I understood. Now his friends, in taking such statements seriously, are perpetuating real harm, such as Whistler himself never for a moment intended. He called me "the robber," and declared that I had stolen his paint, suggested list slippers and a dark lantern, and was altogether very amusing, because I happened to distemper a room lemon yellow.

I had the privilege of being with Whistler for some years, and I trust that I learned many things from him: certainly, if I did not, the omission is deplorable. Whistler did not mean to hurt me — he was really very fond of me. For his friends to take this literally, and imagine that Whistler was the originator of distemper and the colour of lemon yellow, and that I was in truth a robber, is absurd: it is casting ridicule on the Master. When a friend not long ago interceded in my behalf with Whistler, he with admirable wit and adroitness wrote back, "Admiral, beware of those who hoist the black flag: you would not let them board your ship, surely." I might have been offended at that, had I been without sense of humour; but no — such extraordinary aspersions and wit were so great a joy that all sense of bitterness was lost.

Whistler once said to me, "You can only judge of a true friend by his capacity for allowing you to

STREET AT SAVERNE

Whistler
Imp. Delâtre, Rue St. Jacques

IN THE DAY'S ROUND

IN THE DAY'S ROUND

Those days which I spent with Whistler were fascinating beyond words, and at the same time a superb education for me. I will endeavour to give a description of a typical day with the Master.

Invariably every morning by the first post I received a letter, and the letter nearly always said, "Come at once — important." I have dozens of such epistles in my possession now. I would call at his house at about nine o'clock, and we would walk round together to his studio. There the first and foremost duty to be attended to was Whistler's correspondence. No man had more letters calculated to arouse and excite than Whistler. The reading of them always involved quite an hour's conversation, during which time elaborate plans for the scalping of such-and-such a man were laid out. Then Whistler would get his little pochade box, and together we would drift out into the open, — on to the Embankment, or down a side street in Chelsea, — and he would make a little sketch, sometimes in water, sometimes in oil colour. It might be a fish shop with eels for sale at so much a plate, and a few soiled children in the foreground; or perhaps a

sweet-stuff shop, and the children standing with their faces glued to the pane. There we would stay and paint until luncheon time, sitting on rush-bottomed chairs borrowed from the nearest shop. Wherever Whistler went he caused interest and excitement: men, women, and children flocked about him — especially children, Chelsea children, shoals of them. If one of them appealed to Whistler from the decorative standpoint, he would say, "Not bad, Menpes, eh?" This was, perhaps, a very soiled and grubby little person indeed. But Whistler would take her kindly by the hand and ask her where she lived; and the three of us would trot along to ask the mother if she might sit, the child, with its upturned flowerlike though dirty face, gazing with perfect confidence at Whistler. And the Master would talk to the gutter-snipe in a charmingly intimate way about his work and aspirations. "Now we are going to do great things together," he would say, and the little dirty-faced child, blinking up at him, seemed almost to understand. For Whistler never failed with children: no one understood them quite like the Master, and no one depicted child-life better than he. Whistler's children were never little old ladies: they were real children, with all the grace and ingenuousness of childhood apparent in every line. Then would come the tussle with the mother, who, naturally enough, wanted to clean up

THE KITCHEN

her child, and with the Master, who insisted that she should come just as she was, dirt and all. Eventually we would go back to the studio, where, perhaps, the little one would help to set the table for luncheon, settling down at once to full responsibility. Whistler was in some ways very helpless; but he always cooked our luncheon. A great deal of time would be spent over this work, for the Master was very exact and dainty in everything he undertook. There was the breaking of the eggs into the pan and the careful manipulation of an omelette. I would be despatched for a bottle of white wine, and Whistler himself would drink milk with biscuits soaked in it — he always lived on very slender fare. Then the child would sit, and Whistler would paint, — sometimes a life-sized oil-colour, sometimes a little pastel. But from the moment his brush touched the canvas the child as a child was forgotten: she might droop and faint before Whistler would come down to earth again and understand that this was a living mortal. Sometimes after a long afternoon the girl began to bellow, — something was hurting her, or she was stiff with standing so long, — and Whistler, looking up with a start, would say, "Pshaw! What's it all about? Can't you give it something, Menpes? Can't you buy it something?" The child eventually left the studio laden with toys, and perfectly happy once more.

REFERENCE

forgetting his own affairs. When everything had been arranged to his satisfaction, and both tailor and customers were reduced to a condition of collapse, Whistler gathered up his skirts and stepped out into Bond Street.

We would go the round of the different galleries. Whistler never talked much to the dealers. Sometimes he would enter a gallery, and say, "Ha, ha! amazing!" and then sail out. Afterwards he would turn to me, and say, "You know, that does a lot of good: it's like the important bank manager who visits each department every morning and coughs loudly to show his authority."

Sometimes we visited a dealer who owed him money, and Whistler would receive a cheque. Once the cheque was not handed to him in what he thought a sufficiently dignified manner, and he said to the dealer: "This is careless of you. You push this cheque toward me, and you do not realise what a privilege it is to be able to hand it to the Master. You should offer it on a rich old English salver and in a kingly way." Once a dealer borrowed a gorgeously embossed silver salver for the occasion, and when the Master arrived for his cheque — he was very punctual — presented it on the salver with a carefully worded and elegant little speech that he had taken some pains to rehearse. The Master was pleased. "This," said he, "is as it should be."

THAMES WAREHOUSES

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Whistler 1859

TYZAC WHITELEY AND CO.

First state.

LEYZAC WHITELEY & Co
Whistler
1859

watching Whistler. I thought he would have had a fit! Shakspearian plays appealed to Whistler as being exquisitely funny. The poses of the actors, he said, were antagonistic to the period, and he never could understand why the men wore gold boots. Still, no one could be more enthusiastic and stimulating as an audience than Whistler when he chose. For example, Nellie Farren he thought splendid. "Amazing! marvellous!" he would cry every time the curtain fell. Comic songs at the music halls and pantomimes amused him just as if he were a child.

Always, after a theatre, we went to the Hogarth Club, where Whistler gathered all the men about him by the fascination of his talk. Speaking simply in a quiet way to myself, and without once looking round, Whistler would draw every man in that club to his side, — smart young men about town, old fogies, retired soldiers who had been dozing in arm-chairs. The Master himself appeared unconscious: I alone knew that he had wilfully attracted them. He hypnotised those men, every one of them; and it was interesting to watch that slight, fragile little figure sipping his glass of liqueur and holding the attention of that room full of men all drinking unlimited brandies and sodas. Every one of them, I warrant, went away at the end of the evening with a desire for work: Whistler invariably inspired people to work.

He and I would go home together. We always

BLACK AND GOLD, VENICE

From a pastel in the possession of Louis Huth, Esq.

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WHISTLER

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MASTER AND FOLLOWERS

THE MISER

MASTER AND FOLLOWERS

The Whistler Followers were privileged people; but among them there were only two genuine pupils. These were Walter Sickert and myself. The followers never met under the Master's eye; but they formed themselves into a society whose main object was to fight his battles. Individually we meant to fight for ourselves, too; but that was a bold idea, and we never let the Master know it. We were a little clique of the art world, attracted together in the first instance by artistic sympathies. At the most we never numbered a dozen. We were painters of the purely modern school, — impressionists, I suppose we might have been called, — all young, all ardent, all poor. We had our ways to make in the world; we had ambition; we had intentions. Just then we had not much else. Severally and collectively we intended to be great. Of course, we intended to be rich; but that seemed an incidental consideration. We looked upon money merely as an ultimate result. Our immediate object was the work.

As soon as we found that we were in harmony as to our aims, we felt it desirable that we should meet frequently to assist one another in feeling our

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FUMETTE'S BENT HEAD

For personal as well as for artistic reasons, we wished to demonstrate that the highest decorative art is not necessarily expensive, and decided that our plan should be carried out in distemper. Distemper is cheap. Distemper is "broad and simple." Distemper is the best medium for putting on a wall; and in colour, we felt, lay our strength. Thereupon we proposed to take for our model the broad, simple, decorative scheme of the universe. Roughly speaking, our harmony should be that of sea and sky.

The club room was small, and we had realised that to cut it up in patches of decoration would be inartistic. We decided to distemper the walls blue, the colour of the sky, and the ceiling green, the colour of the sea. We did not at that time discover that the scheme was upside-down; but then we had a theory that nature was just as beautiful either way. What did it matter? Any woodwork about was painted the tone of the Dover cliffs, in sympathy with the sea-scape.

There was no fireplace in the room — if there had been we couldn't have afforded coal: — so we bought a paraffin stove, and in winter evenings we used to warm ourselves at its flame. Poor little stove! I always fancied there was something pathetic in the way we edged round it while we discussed art, and in the friendly surreptitious rivalry between boots and knees as to which should get nearest the flame.

been so earnest, there might have been something absurd in this blind chase after the ideal, — a chase through poor, mean places where no ideal could possibly be found. To me the pathos of our misguided energy, the even tragedy of our hopelessly clogged aspirations, lifted our school far beyond the realms of the ludicrous.

At one time we were influenced by the work of another artist, Digars; but, of course, this was kept from the Master. It was Walter Sickert who first saw Digars's work. He brought enthusiastic descriptions of the ballet girls Digars was painting in Paris. We tried to combine the methods of Whistler and Digars, and the result was low-toned ballet girls.

There was another period when we used to travel all round London painting nature from the top of hansom cabs. It was lucky for us that Whistler never saw us. The ignominy of being sent home to bed would have been too terrible.

Once an interesting figure appeared on our horizon, — a French painter. He was Whistler's find, and was held up to us Followers as an example. "At last," Whistler said, "I have found a follower worthy of the Master." (I noticed with secret joy that he did not call him pupil.) This man went bareheaded always when in the presence of Whistler: whether out of doors or in, no one could persuade him to wear a hat.

He was a great example, for we were becoming a

little careless — we sometimes forgot ourselves, and wore hats. The Frenchman was charming, and a brilliant mathematician. He it was who designed a series of mathematical instruments for matching the tones of nature. Also, he worked out a scheme for mixing perfectly pure pigment. It was by means of grinding crystals into a powder, which, he declared, used as a pigment, compared with the ordinary colours would appear just as brilliant as a patch of snow on a muddy road.

At one time the Followers became prismatic. This gave us a good deal of trouble. We began to paint in spots and dots; we painted also in stripes and bands. Form with us meant being perfect from the decorative point of view. That was all that mattered. Nature, we said, is for the painter a decorative patch; a portrait, a blot of colour, merely an object in relation to a background. We held it a fundamental error to introduce into pictorial art elements belonging strictly (we supposed) to the literary art. "Nature," we said, "for the painter should be divested of all human and spiritual attributes; sentiment, philosophy, poetry, romance — these things belong to the literary art, and are not in the painter's palette." For him, nature should be tilted forward and without distance — a Japanese screen, a broad mass of tones — a piece of technique. The face in a portrait should not be more important than the background. The moment you realised that

ANNIE HADEN

REFERENCE

UNDER OLD BATTERSEA BRIDGE

With boat in charcoal, first state.

it was a face, the literary art came in; and you had better give it a cup of tea, or pull its nose.

In the end we swept away all faces. Features, we felt, were unnecessary. A broad sweep of flesh tone sufficed for a portrait. We saw no difference between a face and a peach or a peach and a coal-scuttle.

Then we began to realise that nature was very fair, and that if you got into a coal-cellar and looked through the chink of a door you saw her much more truly than in any other way. For some time we painted nature only through the chinks of doors. Some of us became very exact. Others talked of the folly of painting pictures only at one hour of the day, — midday. Therefore, we began to paint pictures at all times, — morning, noon, and night. We were continually asking one another to guess at what hour such-and-such a picture was painted. A Follower would suggest eleven-thirty. "Right you are — almost," the proud possessor would answer. Not eleven-thirty, but eleven-fifteen — because at that time the shadows were stealing round the hay-stack and forming that particular pattern. The school was becoming scientific. To be able to tell the time of day by a picture was astounding!

I must excuse myself for dwelling on the subject of the Followers. Our lives at that time were wrapped up in the one great and overpowering individuality of Whistler. It was he who stimulated us to do these extraordinary things. Our principles were his princi-

ples exaggerated. The Master was too great to be approached on the subject of art directly. We had never mentioned to him the school or its aims. We feared that he would perhaps regard it as insignificant, and us, its members, as unworthy exponents of aims so serious.

We seldom asked Whistler questions about his work, such as the way he mixed his pigment. If we had, he would have been sure to say, "Pshaw! you must be occupied with the Master, not with yourselves. There is plenty to be done." If there was not, Whistler would always make a task for you, — a picture to be taken in to the Dowdeswell's, or a copperplate to have a ground put on it.

Only once I remember him really teaching us anything. He told it to us two pupils; and Sickert, I remember, took down every word on his cuff. He described how in Venice once he was drawing a bridge, and suddenly, as though in a revelation, the secret of drawing came to him. He felt that he wanted to keep it to himself, lest someone should use it, — it was so sure, so marvellous. This is roughly how he described it: "I began first of all by seizing upon the chief point of interest. Perhaps it might have been the extreme distance, — the little palaces and the shipping beneath the bridge. If so, I would begin drawing that distance in elaborately, and then would expand from it until I came to the bridge,

THE SILK DRESS

Undescribed in Wedmore's Catalogue.

Whistler
1859.

which I would draw in one broad sweep. If by chance I did not see the whole of the bridge, I would not put it in. In this way the picture must necessarily be a perfect thing from start to finish. Even if one were to be arrested in the middle of it, it would still be a fine and complete picture."

That is the only instance that I can remember of Whistler sitting down and actually explaining anything to the pupils; but, of course, in a thousand subtle ways we benefited by his presence. In fact, as artists we owed our existence entirely to the Master. We were allowed the intimacy of his studio; we watched him paint day after day; we studied his methods, witnessed his failures and successes. He never placed us down as pupils and told us to paint such-and-such an object, nor did he ever see our work when it was finished; but we felt his influence, nevertheless, and strongly. We were true Followers; and in the first stage of our enthusiasm we had such a reverence for the Master that, highly as we esteemed Velasquez and Rembrandt, we still looked upon these persons as mere drivellers in art compared with him. Strange, eager amateurs we would recognise sometimes, but only because they painted on the Whistler lines. One lady, I remember, used to paint flowers. We thought her work very fine. She had no academic training; but we placed her high because she painted on grey panels and in sympathy with Whistler. He,

of course, we placed far above Raphael. In fact, we couldn't stand Raphael, because Whistler had said that he was the smart young man of his period.

One rainy day Whistler was sitting in my dining room poring over a large volume of Raphael's cartoons. After spending two hours with them, he came to the conclusion that Raphael did not count. But he was pleased, he said, to have had the opportunity of placing the smart young man of his day. Rembrandt we recognised to a certain extent, because Whistler had been heard to say that he had had his good days. Also, however, he had remarked that Rembrandt revelled in gummy pigment and treacly tones: so Rembrandt, in our opinion, did not occupy much of a position. Canaletto and Velasquez we placed high, very high, but not, of course, on the same plane with Whistler. The only master with whom we could compare our own was Hokusai, the Japanese painter.

At that time we copied Whistler in every detail. If he painted from a table instead of using a palette, from that moment onward we discarded the use of palettes. Whistler talked of breadth and simplicity, and broader and emptier sketches than the Followers produced you could not possibly imagine. At that period I was painting little children on the sands — some clad only in sunbonnets, and others without the bonnets. I began to paint so broadly and so simply

ROTHERHITHE

Rare state with white boat.

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that the flesh tone of the child and the sand were so much alike that the picture, when it was finished, resembled a clean sheet of paper.

Then, in company with the other Followers, I acquired the "grey-panel" craze. Personally, I have never seen nature in grey tones, but often in vivid, almost prismatic, colours; and the feeble little pictures I produced, stained grey panels in Whistlerian frames, were almost pathetic in their futility.

We Followers saw things from Whistler's standpoint. If we etched a plate, we had to etch it almost exactly on Whistlerian lines. If Whistler kept his plates fair, ours were so fair that they could scarcely be seen. If Whistler adopted economy of means, using the fewest possible lines, we became so nervous that we could scarcely touch the plate lest we should overelaborate.

Of course, there were moments when we rebelled from the Master's influence and tried to be bold. "The whole principle of art," we said, "is that you must be bold: you must be careless, indifferent, reckless." There was no such thing as technique. It did not matter what you used — brush, charcoal, drypoint, — you must be bold. We tore ourselves away from breadth and simplicity, staining panels and economising means, and we tried to be bold.

It was then that the athletic period began, the period of overeating. "Good work," we said, "is impossible

without good food"; and thenceforward we spent our time at restaurants. One of the Followers etched a plate at luncheon with a fork. This did occur to me, even in my feverish condition, as being a trifle extravagant. Even the Master never followed more than one point, — to use four seemed rather too bold; — but the Follower was perfectly in earnest as to his "fork method," and etched a plate regularly every night at dinner. At my house he etched a plate of a celebrated lady artist. In the small hours of the morning I took it upstairs and printed a proof. I placed the proof in a frame, so that we might the better judge of its merit. It was framed in the usual way, and, as I remembered afterwards, it had been etched upright; but one could not be too particular, and the Follower never even noticed the mistake. He looked at his work in a satisfied, admiring way, and said, "Amazing!" We all echoed him — feebly, I must admit. Then he turned to us, and said: "Friends, always remember this golden rule — in art nothing matters so long as you are bold. These swift lines of mine, put on with a fork, have great boldness and assurance. What does it matter whether it is a portrait of the lady artist or not?" To us it looked remarkably like a rainy day.

This may indicate the condition of Whistler's Followers; and, mind you, it is absolutely true — there is no exaggeration.

AXENFELD

Whistler '86

THE FORGE

At that early period one serious cause of disquiet to the most earnest among us was that in the ordinary course of nature we might not live long enough to carry out the great work of reform. We used often seriously to consider means of arriving at a hale old age. One of us used regularly to oil himself. He said the ancients did it. Anyhow, he fancied that the practice would enable him to live longer.

I remember, too, our calling a meeting of the school in order to discuss the method of an old man whom some of us had met on the Embankment when we were studying a night effect. He was a very old man, friendly, with artistic tastes. He came up to us and talked about the lovely sky and the reflections in the water, and soon we were intimate. Instinctively feeling that he was in sympathy with the work, we confided to him our objects in life. He condoled with us on the dunderheadedness of a crass public whom it took a century to convert to a new theory. "But you are young yet," he said hopefully, "and you can manage it if you keep your health and energy." Then he told us that he had found out a method of lengthening his days to a hundred years. He would be glad to impart his secret, and asked us to go with him to his lodging close by and see what he called his hygienic implements. We went. It was an important matter that we should each live a hundred years. That was not nearly sufficient time in which to perform

RENCE

scribed in proportion to our means. For a week after this meeting there was not much work done, for we were all brushing ourselves. Somehow our enthusiasm for the old man's hygienic method didn't last. After a fortnight our skins became so tender that we were obliged to give it up, and by tacit agreement the subject of brushes was dropped.

The Master sometimes encouraged us. Once he encouraged me very much indeed. Before I had met Whistler, I had been etching a series of plates in Brittany, and I showed him some of the proofs. They were the first I ever did. He told me to send them to the Crystal Palace exhibition, where he himself was one of the judges. I sent several of them in a frame, and received a gold medal. This mark of his favour naturally elated me tremendously. The Master was with me! He had given me a gold medal! I felt that I had a future before me. He said, "You have the gold medal, Menpes, and Du Maurier the silver one; but don't forget that there is plenty of time — don't occupy yourself too much with your own affairs!"

It was pathetic sometimes — the way the Followers would attempt to copy Whistler's mannerisms. We tried to use stinging phrases and to say cutting things. Our mild expressions, I am afraid, did not carry them off to advantage.

Afterwards, when I had been thrust out of the school and looked back with clear, calm judgment at

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THE LITTLE FORGE

Early proof before monogram.

CHELSEA WHARF

CHELSEA
WHARF

THE MAN

THE MAN

WHISTLER was essentially a purist, both as man and as worker. As a man he was sadly misunderstood by the masses. His nature was combative, and his long and brilliant career was a continuous fight. He revealed himself only to the few, and even that small inner circle, of whom I was one of the most devoted, saw the real man but seldom. On the rare occasions Whistler could be gentle, sweet, sympathetic, almost feminine, so lovable was he; and he was, as I said, essentially a purist. No one has ever heard Whistler tell a story which was not absolutely unobjectionable. Such a thing was impossible, for he never had a vulgar thought.

Even in so small a detail as the dressing of his hair, Whistler was most particular. Many people thought him vain; but that idea is quite false. He treated his hair, as he could not but treat everything about him, purely from the artistic standpoint, as a picture, a bit of decoration. Many a time have I been with him to his hair-dresser in Regent Street, and very serious and important was the dressing of the Master's head. Customers ceased to be interested in their own hair; operators stopped their manipulations; every-

Whistler
55

Whistler wanted a comb! This procured, he would comb the white lock into a feathery plume, and with a few broad movements of his hand form the whole into a picture. Then he would look beamingly at himself in the glass, and say but two words, — "Menpes, amazing!" — and sail triumphantly out of the shop. Once, having stepped into a four-wheeler, he put his head out to give a direction to the driver. His hat just touched the window, and disarranged his hair. Whistler stopped the cab, got out, reëntered the hair-dresser's, and the work began again.

In his mode of dress also he was constant to his artistic conceptions. His was not an attempt at eccentricity. Many a time have I been with Whistler to his tailor's, and watched him being measured and the garments tried on; and, although his directions to the fitter were very particular and extraordinary, it was always the artist who talked, and not the vain man of fashion. He wanted to procure certain lines in his frock coat, and he insisted upon having the skirt cut very long, while over the shoulders there were to be capes which must needs form graceful curves in sympathy with the long flowing lines of the skirt. The idea of wearing white duck trousers with a black coat was conceived, not in order to be unlike other people, but because they formed a harmony in black and white which he loved. His straight-brimmed hat, his cane, the way he held his cane, each and

Whistler for some reason or another. They had lashed themselves into a fever of rage against him, and were quite prepared to bring violent physical force to bear upon his person if necessary. The master was a nervous man by nature, sensitive and highly strung. I remember seeing the frail little figure enter the room, and walk through the crowd of antagonists, all glaring at him vindictively. To show his calmness and strength of mind, he went up to a gas-jet in the middle of the room, held out his cigarette steadily at arm's length, and lit it. He never missed an opportunity of this kind to hide beneath a jaunty exterior nervousness and sensitiveness. He handled his little fights and chastisements in such a way that he always got the better of his adversary.

He never did anything foolish, such as attacking a man physically stronger than himself in the open — that would be hopelessly inartistic. I remember once saying to him in one of his sympathetic moods, "Of course, you don't know what fear is?" — "Ah, yes! I do," Whistler answered. "I should hate, for example, to be standing opposite a man who was a better shot than I, far away out in the forest in the bleak, cold, early morning. Fancy I, the Master, standing out in the open as a target to be shot at! Pshaw! It would be foolish and inartistic. I never mind calling a man out; but I always have the sense to know that he is not likely to come."

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SPEKE HALL

Etched figure touched with wash.

SPEKE HALL

Etched figure completed with monogram.

I committed the unpardonable offence of going to Japan. Japan should have been saved for the Master. I must admit that I really did slip off like a naughty boy sneaking out of school. I felt that he would resent my leaving him. I remember quite well writing a note to Whistler on my way to the station, and leaving it at a little tobacconist shop in the King's Road, not far from his home, which I begged the man there not to deliver until some hours afterward. All the way to Paddington, as I journeyed onward, I blamed myself bitterly for having left the Master. I felt that I was doing a wrong thing in leaving him at that his greatest period, when he needed all his friends about him. Still, I too had a career to make, and was determined to succeed. Whistler, when I left England, was much occupied with me. He wrote a series of letters — pin-pricks every one of them — which reached me in Japan, and even in their journey out they had lost none of their power to sting. I longed then to go back and fill my old position again by Whistler's side as trusted friend. I yearned for the old days when I lived in the intimacy of his studio and we worked together and almost thought together. Many a time, unable to bear up any longer, I was on the point of taking the next steamer home. I felt myself to be an outcast, exiled and alone. One or the other, however, had to be sacrificed, — either Whistler's friendship

or my own career, — and in the struggle friendship went to the wall.

When I returned to London, I met Whistler at the Hogarth Club, surrounded by feeble followers. Sad little people they were, aping the Master to the verge of pathos — small editions of Whistler without backbone. When he saw me he laughed his marvellous laugh, and said, "Ha, ha! amazing!" All round the room one heard faint echoes, "Ha, ha! amazing!" "Well, sir," he said, "excuse yourself." I found it difficult, for I earnestly felt that from his standpoint there really was no excuse for my conduct. I could discover nothing with which I could plead extenuating circumstances. At the same time, filled with remorse and shame though I was, I could not resist telling him that I had met, in Japan, another master. "What!" screamed Whistler. "How dare you call this Japanese a master on your own responsibility? Give me your reasons. What do you mean by it?" Then and there, in the Hogarth Club before Whistler and his followers, I began to explain Kyôsai's method of painting. So engrossed did I become in my topic that I talked on and on far into the night, forgetting all antagonism, forgetting everything, except that I was a student, and was describing to one master the methods of another. I explained that every touch Kyôsai placed upon his stretched silk was perfectly balanced and well placed, and that therefore, if the

MODEL RESTING

picture were arrested at any moment during its career, it would form a perfect whole, every line balancing the other. "That is my method," interrupted Whistler in a protesting, impatient voice. "No," I answered gently: "that is the method of Kyôsai." I continued my narrative. I explained that, after having made his drawing, Kyôsai proceeded to paint his picture. I described how that he began when painting a figure by mixing his different tones in little blue pots, such as flesh tone, drapery tone, tones for the hair, gold-ornament tone, and that there was no searching for tones as on the average palette. There was no accident: all was sure, a scientific certainty from beginning to end. I told him that Kyôsai displayed enormous facility and great knowledge. A black dress would be one beautiful broad tone of black, the flesh one clear tone of flesh, the shadows growing out of the mass forming a part of the whole. "That is my method," Whistler broke in volubly: "that is exactly my method. I don't paint my shadows in little blues, and greens, and yellows until they cease to be a part of the picture. I paint them exactly as they are in nature, as a part of the whole. This Kyôsai must be a wonderful man, for his methods are my methods. Go on, Menpes: tell me more!" I then told him that when a Japanese artist was drawing a bird he began with the point of interest, which, let us say, was the eye. The brilliant black

eye of a crow fixed upon a piece of meat attracted his attention; he remembered it, and the first few strokes he portrayed upon his stretched silk would be the eye of the bird. The neck, the legs, the body — everything radiated and sprang from that bright eye, just as it would in the animal itself. Whistler was quiet after this last description — quite quiet, and very thoughtful. He forgot his anger against me for going to Japan, forgot everything, save his intense interest and desire to hear more of the Japanese painter who also was a master. The feeble followers he dismissed. Treating me as a friend and pupil once more, Whistler took me by the arm, and we walked home together to the "Vale." We sat up talking until the small hours of the morning; or rather I talked, for once, and Whistler sat drinking in every word. I described Kyôsai's methods in detail, even to the mixing of his pigment and the preparing of his silk panels, for Whistler in some ways was a faddist and revelled in detail. When he was bidding me good-by on the doorstep, Whistler's last words were, "These Japanese are marvellous people, and this man Kyôsai must be a very great painter; but, — do you know? — his methods and mine are absolutely similar!"

Whistler's real quarrel with me came a little while afterwards. A day or two before my exhibition of Japanese pictures opened, he appeared in the gallery, looking very cross and carrying in his hand an open

WHISTLER'S MOTHER

copy of *The Pall Mall Gazette.* I happened to be talking to a friend, and did not notice his entrance; but I was told afterwards that his face wore a set, determined expression which to those who knew him predicted one of his historical scenes. However, he refrained from chastising me. There was only his frail bamboo cane for weapon, and it did not seem quite the moment. Still, he had lashed himself into a fury; for he literally foamed at the mouth, and there was a slight fleck of foam upon the black ribbon of his necktie. I remember feeling ashamed of myself and unworthy as I saw that tie. What right had I, I asked myself, to arrest this great man in his work, to check masterpieces, to cause him to occupy and worry himself for one moment with my small affairs, and pour his wrath upon me, no matter how unmerited it might be? The Master flew up to me, and began without waiting for explanations. "You have inspired this article in *The Pall Mall Gazette.* It is written by Mr. Spielmann; but it is inspired by you, for you alone could know that I use black as a universal harmoniser." I was aghast. At that time I was far too unsophisticated to inspire anyone or anything, and I was young enough to feel highly flattered at the idea of having inspired so clever a man as Mr. Spielmann. "Also," he continued, "you have stolen my ideas. The eccentric hanging of this gallery brings ridicule upon the Master. Now, what do you propose

to do? Your only hope of salvation is to walk up and down Bond Street with *Pupil of Whistler* printed in large letters on a sandwich board at your back, so that the world may know that it is I, Whistler, who have created you. You will also write to *The Pall Mall Gazette*, and tell them that you have stolen my ideas; also you will call yourself a robber." By this time feeling quite flattened out and annihilated, I said that I had no habits of letter-writing, but that I would insert a footnote in my catalogue and acknowledge the generous help of the Master in my artistic life. Whistler instantly turned upon me, more enraged than ever. "Sir," he said, "your conduct savours of the police court," and marched out of the gallery.

The last stab of all that I received from his rapier was after I had distempered my house in Fulham, and it became talked about in the newspapers as "The Home of Taste"; it was in connection with this house that he had me interviewed for a Philadelphian newspaper. The interview was extraordinarily fantastic and purely imaginary, and Whistler ordered three thousand copies of it, which he distributed broadcast among my friends and his own. Some people received as many as three copies. His flooding of the studios with this interview was supposed to have killed me. From that moment I was looked upon as one no longer living, and Whistler sent me

DOROTHY MENPES

From an oil-painting in the possession of
Dorothy Menpes.

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the following little note: "You will blow your brains out, of course. Pigot has shown you what to do under the circumstances, and you know your way to Spain. Good-by." The butterfly with which the note was signed was almost the cleverest part of it. It was represented with wings spread and back turned, soaring away, leaving behind it, on the end of a long tail, a venomed shaft.

From that time onwards, whenever my name was mentioned, Whistler was wont to say, "Eh, what? Meneps — who's Meneps?" All the poor little followers by whom he was surrounded echoed, and are no doubt echoing still: "Meneps? Who's Meneps?"

Whistler had always a strong sense of humour and a love of practical jokes. He was the same Whistler even when a boy. I remember hearing once from a lady who knew him well — they had been children together, and at the same little school — the story of Whistler's first spanking. It came about through Jimmy's love of practical jokes. Their schoolmaster was a rector, a worthy man with a prodigiously long neck. He was in the habit of wearing enormous collars, to hide this unfortunate defect. One day little Whistler marched into the school rather late, wearing, in order to produce a greater effect, an enormously long collar entirely covering his ears, a facsimile of the rector's, which the young rogue had made himself, out of paper. The whole school was convulsed with

laughter; but Jimmy strode solemnly to his desk, calm and serene, sat down, and went on with his work as usual. For a time the master could only glare at him; but at last, unable to stand it any longer, thundered down from his desk and made a dive at the child. Whistler eluded him and ran into the girls' half of the school, where he took refuge behind their skirts. They all protected him valiantly for some time, especially his little friend; but in vain: the rector eventually caught him, and he was soundly spanked.

As he grew older Whistler's love of practical jokes did not diminish. When quite a lad he was placed in a Government Office; but his originality wrought his destruction, and he was dismissed. Just as he was leaving the Office he passed through the chief's room, and his eye was caught by a huge magnifying glass which lay on a desk. Now, this glass was no ordinary one, but was used on the most solemn occasions by the "old man" only, and was held in much awe by the staff. Whistler, full of bitter thoughts, stooped over the desk for a moment, and painted a little demon right in the middle of the sacred magnifying glass, and passed on his way with a smile. Next day, when the great man solemnly lifted his glass to inspect something, he saw nothing but a horrid little grinning demon, and dropped it on the table with a howl, thinking that he had gone out of his mind.

THE VELVET DRESS

BIBLIOTHÈQUE
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ELINOR LEYLAND

Very early proof.

Various anecdotes are related of Whistler's fondness for jokes. Men who lived with him in Paris have told me that the Master was ever full of mischief. "One never knew," they said, "what Whistler would do next." Those days he spent in Paris studying and struggling, Whistler once told me, were the happiest of his life. There also, studying at the same period, were Du Maurier and E. J. Poynter. Many a story Whistler has told me of the lives they led. He told me of a man who used to copy one special picture at the Louvre, a picture of a saint in a blue dress, for which he always received thirty francs. As many copies as he could paint were bought for that sum. They were not bad in their way, and no one could understand how it was possible for him to paint them for that price and thrive. Whistler explained his methods. The copyist arrived at the gallery quite early, before any of the other students, and, looking round the room, noticed a canvas, belonging to a lady artist, with a much-laboured, half-finished copy upon it, exactly the size of the picture he, the painter, wished to copy. Watching carefully until the attendant was out of sight, he very rapidly and cleverly slid the canvas from off the easel of the lady artist on to his own, and quickly covered it with earth colours — ordinary pigment he could not afford. Then he would sketch in his picture and carry it as far as possible before the students

arrived. By and by the lady artist appeared, and missed her canvas. There was a great fuss, and a cry all over the room of the "lost canvas." From the top of a high ladder the venerable painter at work on his blue-robed saint looked down reprovingly through his spectacles, and said, in an authoritative way: "Hush! The students must not be disturbed! What do you say, madam? Your canvas has gone? Nonsense, my dear lady: it can't walk! What size may it have been?" The lady murmured that it was much the size of his own, and, feeling that she had been creating too much of an annoyance, started to work on a new canvas. Now another difficulty presented itself before the painter. His picture was nearly finished; but it required certain and expensive colours, such as rose madder and cobalt blue. Soon an amateur sailed in, trying to look as though he had lived his life in a studio, but with "amateur" written all over him. Dressed in a velvet jacket with silk facings, and a voluminous necktie carefully twisted round to one side to look careless, he took up a position directly underneath "the painter," and started to work on a large canvas with much elaborate paraphernalia. He squeezed out great worms of the most expensive colours on a large, brand-new palette, and started to copy a picture with much care and consideration. Ere long the little man on the ladder climbed down and started on a tour of

MAUDE

Trial proof, with dark tippet.

BOURGE
REFERENCE

MAUDE

With fur tippet indicated in wash.

MAUDE

Trial proof, with light tippet.

MAUDE

Trial proof, without tippet.

MAUDE

Final proof, with rich fur tippet.

inspection round the gallery, criticising the works as he passed; for he was an old hand, and his opinion of some value. He paused for some minutes before the picture of the newcomer, looking with a cold and critical eye backward and forward from the copy to the original. Soon the novice began to feel his gaze, and turned sharply round; but the wily artist was gazing elaborately at the ceiling. This went on for some time: until, at last, the newcomer asked him flatly if he could see anything wrong with his picture. "No — not at all," said the other, nonchalantly, proceeding to go on his way. "Now, look here! I know there is something you don't like about my picture. Be a good fellow, and tell me what it is." — "If you really want to know, I will tell you frankly. I don't think that — that figure is quite — quite — in proportion." At this the artist began to gesticulate with his right hand, as all Frenchmen do, holding the left over his shoulder with the palette on his thumb — Flip! — off went a fat curl of rose madder safely folded in the critic's palm. Then, as the palette went back again, to make the poor wretch more excited, he suggested that a certain blue, which was obviously greenish, was too purple. This suggestion always proved a great success. The palette was flung back again, and all the pigment scraped off with a careful forefinger. Then the helping friend went off with

his magnificent haul to finish his picture, leaving the artist muttering to himself, with indignation: "Ridiculous! ridiculous! Anybody can see that that is a greenish blue. Purple indeed!" By and by you would see him stand up and look curiously about him, examining first his coat tails, and then his sleeves. After gazing for some time with blank amazement at his swept palette, which looked as though someone had been sitting on it, he would squeeze out more pigment and begin to spoil his work by correcting the badly drawn figure, and altering the offending blue to verdigris. He would probably end his days in the nearest lunatic asylum. The painter meanwhile, though wrecking other people's lives, lived and throve upon his thirty-francs-apiece pictures painted from borrowed pigment. He was by nature a great entertainer, and was continually giving little parties to the students at the Louvre in his fifth-floor attic.

Whistler was invited many times, and once he had the curiosity to accept the painter's invitation and attend one of the banquets. He was met at the entrance by the little man, who appeared to be much enraged, and, as they mounted the stairs together, explained the reason of his anger. On the first floor they passed a door whereon had been painted a single human hair, much magnified, and, crawling up it, large yellow insects. "Now," said the little man,

MAUDE, SEATED

First state, with full face.

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MAUDE, SEATED

Second state, face redrawn three-quarters.

triumphantly, "look at that: I painted it! It is my revenge! Every day for the last fortnight I have been worried by my landlady, who declares that a disturbance is kept up in my room until three or four o'clock in the morning." The day before, this extraordinary person told Whistler, she had been so annoying and crotchety that he, as a revenge, had been angling for her favourite goldfish which sported in a bowl outside her window just beneath his own. "She opens the window every morning," he said, "and calls the fish by names, — Rose, Rose, Rose; Fanny, Fanny, Fanny, — and then she throws them bread. Now, this afternoon I have spent some hours and with great trouble have fished every one of those creatures up here, fried them, and let them down again into the bowl. I look forward to seeing her expression to-morrow morning when she opens her window and calls for Fanny and Rose and finds them fried."

The table, Whistler said, was laid, for a poor painter, very sumptuously, and with all manner of good things; at which he, knowing the poverty of the man, was greatly surprised; but when dinner was over and everything had been demolished, the painter explained the origin of this display. "I have a pet monkey," he said, "which I let down from my window by a rope into that of my landlady, and trust to providence. Sometimes Jacko returns

with a loaf, sometimes with a ham. His visits are full of surprises — one never knows what may appear."

Whistler also often gave banquets, both in Paris and in London, and especially luncheon parties, which in England he called breakfasts. He was by nature a marvellous cook, though perhaps rather too faddy, so much so that the dishes became cold while the sauce was in preparation. One's interest never flagged, and one's appetite became more and more keen as the hours advanced. Whistler cooked, as he painted, with marvellous skill and genius, but with great uncertainty. Late in the afternoon a golden omelette might be placed upon the table; but then, again, it might not. In cookery, as in all things, he was a purist, and showed great decorative sense. By the uninitiated, and by those who had no sense of decoration, this quality was not appreciated. For examples, they did not care for tinted rice pudding, and butter stained apple-green they looked upon with suspicion. They did not realise — how should they?— that as a purist one must see that one's butter harmonises with the blue of one's plate.

Whistler, although he was a temperate man, and only sipped while other men drank, was a great judge of wine. I remember George Meredith telling me that Whistler had a finer appreciation of old

wine than any man he knew, and that, what was more, he knew how to talk about it.

At these little breakfasts of his the Master was sometimes forced to be very economical. He often said to me: "Look here, Menpes. I wish you would go and buy a bottle of eighteen-penny white wine from the Victorian Wine Company. We will decant it carefully, and, what with my brilliant conversation and the refined atmosphere of the studio, these men will never know whether it is good or bad. Somehow men understand red wine. If you give them a cheap vintage, they recognise vinegar; but with the qualities of white wine they are not so familiar." So it always proved to be. This eighteen-penny white wine was produced at the famous Whistler breakfasts, where it was pronounced to be perfect. "A very sound wine, very sound indeed," I have heard men say as they held it up to the light, handling it carefully as though it were priceless — in exactly the same way I have seen them caress a blue-and-white plate. I have heard intelligent men dilate for hours upon the beauty and rarity of certain porcelain which I myself have seen Whistler buy at a cheap shop round the corner, or which has been presented at our doors in company with a pound of Oriental tea.

At this period Whistler and I nearly always spent our evenings together. Sometimes we would look in at a play; but generally it was to a dinner party we

went. On one or two occasions — but not often, for the strain was too much for my sense of humour — we accepted invitations to musical evenings. Now, Whistler had no sense of music, absolutely none, and neither had I: two more unmusical people it would be difficult to find. I always sat, if possible, at the extreme corner of the room; for to catch Whistler's eye was to disgrace myself for ever in the opinion of my hostess. His expression as he looked at the different musicians was too comical for my equanimity. I remember once going with Whistler to a house in which there lived a family of musicians — geniuses, every one of them — and they gave a musical evening. Some sang, some played the violin, others the piano; there were 'cellos, fifes, trombones, big drums, and every instrument you could possibly imagine. Whistler, I remember, sat on a Louis Quatorze settee, with his mouth wide open and a perfectly blank expression on his face, watching these people, as they performed one after the other, as though he had been hypnotised. He couldn't speak to me, he didn't speak to me; but I heard him muttering to himself, "Pshaw! what's it all about?" Suddenly a lady appeared, an old lady, rather plain, but intensely musical, and was looked upon with admiration and awe by the entire company. She was also a crank, and for some reason — I never knew quite why — she always carried bread and butter in her pocket. She had not the air of a gour-

MOREBY HALL, INTERIOR

From a water-colour drawing in the possession of
J. J. Cowan, Esq.

PÚBLICO LIBRARY

mand either — I can only imagine that it must have been her luncheon, which she carried on her person in case of emergency. When I saw her sail into the room, I trembled as I thought of Whistler. If only she had remained quiet, things might not have been so bad. The Master might have forgotten the bread-and-butter episode and controlled himself without much trouble. She had no consideration whatever. When pressed, she rose immediately and began to play upon the piano and to sing. Her hands moved faster and faster across the notes, and her voice rose higher and higher. I turned to look at Whistler. His gaze was fastened upon the top of the lady's head. I looked up, and there I saw a weather-cock whirling at an almost incredible pace, making countless revolutions to the minute, on the very summit of her coiled auburn hair. There must have been a perfect gale blowing, for this weather-cock whirled faster than anything I have seen on a church steeple; and it was impossible to tell in which direction lay the wind, for the arrow pointed now north, now south, so rapidly that it was difficult to distinguish between the two. Presently the performing lady arose, amidst a perfect furore of applause, and after a few words in the ear of her hostess, to my utter consternation and dismay she was led up, formally introduced, and sat down next to Whistler. She asked him what he thought of her singing. I heard him say, "Ha, ha!

amazing!"; but could stay no longer, and fled precipitately from the room. Half an hour afterwards he joined me in the studio. "Let us cleanse ourselves, Menpes," he said. "Let us print an etching."

Sarasate, when Whistler was painting him, often used to play to the Master. His playing he really enjoyed, "for," as Whistler once said to me afterwards, "it was marvellous, you know, to see Sarasate handle his violin, especially during those violent parts —his bow seemed to travel up and down the strings so rapidly, I cannot imagine how he does it." It was the dexterity that he admired: the music he did not understand.

Whistler had one song which he always sang, and sometimes he whistled it. It was called, "And his Heart was True to Poll." There was never any more of it, so far as I could make out; and whenever a picture was going well, or he was especially pleased about anything, I used to hear him singing in a high, falsetto voice, "And his heart was true to Poll." When I first came in touch with Whistler, there was continually in his company a man who exercised a superficial though extraordinarily strong influence over him. He was a strange character with a quaint sense, altogether his own, of the relative meanings of mine and thine. In fact, he was generally known among us as the robber pure and simple. The fact that he robbed his friends, curiously enough, in no

TILLIE—A MODEL

Elaborately touched in water colour.

MUSEUM
REFERENCE

SEATED GIRL

Unique state.

BIBLIOTHÈQUE
INTERNE

wise injured the friendship between them. Among robbers this gentleman was an artist, a very prince of banditti and a great connoisseur. I have good reason to believe that he was the originator of the craze for blue-and-white china. Certainly he was a born collector. He gathered pink coral, and in three weeks his collection became the finest in London. If a man was placed in possession of his house, he dressed him up and made him wait at table.

The Master very seldom encouraged any of us Followers; but on the rare occasions when he threw us a chance word of praise we valued it enormously, and repeated it over and over again to our friends — the Master had said so-and-so. I remember my joy at a particularly brilliant and sparkling supper party, when Whistler acknowledged a remark of mine as being witty. Unfortunately, I had not meant it to be so. The supper was given to a poor but very clever painter, and I was so struck with his genius and his poverty that I whispered to Whistler, "I should like to send that man an anonymous cheque." The Master roared with laughter, and told the whole table of this witticism that I had given birth to, "but all unwittingly," he added: "he never meant it — it is not at all bad for the bush."

Whistler himself was very vague where money matters were concerned. Many a time, as is well known, he has found himself in financial difficulties.

It seems terrible to think that so great a man should ever have suffered for want of money; but it was so. One day he was in great trouble. He had received what he called "a quaint piece of paper," which, I saw at a glance, was a final application for rent, accompanied by a threat that if the money was not paid the next morning a man would be put in possession. At that moment he was preparing an exhibition, and half the pictures were in the house. If the man in possession were to appear, the enterprise would be stopped. Whistler was very serious over this, and wanted to know what was to be done. "Can't you go into the city and sign something, Menpes," he asked, "something that will bring in money?" Alack! neither I nor Whistler had any knowledge of city habits. At length we decided that we had better call on the auctioneer in person. We started coolly and calmly and a trifle frightened; but Whistler soon decided that his only hope in talking to this auctioneer was to lash himself into a furious rage. I remember that walk so well. All the way along he kept murmuring to himself: "It's monstrous! This thing's impossible! How dared they send such a paper to me, an artist in the midst of my work? The man must be demented!" and so on, until, by the time we had reached the office, he was in a magnificent condition. As we entered, a very humble-looking little man was drying his face with

THE DESK

Trial proof, third state.

RÉFÉRENCE

THE DESK

Trial proof.

a towel. "Do you know who I am?" thundered Whistler. Looking as though he had been shot, the auctioneer said he thought he was Mr. Whistler. "Yes: I am Mr. Whistler," the Master replied in clear, cold tones as he handed him over the notice; "and I beg that you will explain yourself. What do you mean by sending me all these papers that I have received from time to time? Each notice has become more vicious in colour and in character, and at last the colouring has become so atrocious that I have come to demand of you what you mean by arresting an artist in his career? And I want you to understand that it is not always convenient to lay down one's work to attend to sordid details of this kind. Do you also realise, sir, that there is such a thing as excess of zeal? It is possible that your master may chide you for having thus hindered the work of a great painter. It is also possible that he may blame you for lumping all your clients together and treating them in the same manner. There are exceptions, my good auctioneer, — there are exceptions. But, after all, how should you know? I had forgotten that you were only an auctioneer. You can let your master know," added Whistler, as he laid the notice on the table, "that I, Mr. Whistler, have been here"; and with that he swept out of the shop, leaving the auctioneer speechless. He turned to me as we left the office.

"I think he has now a better idea of my position," he said.

Our next act was to gather together enough money to pay the rent, for we had sufficient business instincts to know that the man would still be put in possession. It took us many hours; but at length we managed to sweep in the amount in five-pound notes, pounds, and even odd shillings. Then Whistler was worried. He thought there should be some explanation for paying these people in pounds, shillings, and pence. "They will say that the Master is really hard up, because I cannot send them a cheque," he said: "I must write them a letter." With that he wrote one of his marvellous letters, in which he explained that in dealing with people so vulgar and so little accustomed to the habits of the polite world he had found it necessary to put himself to the trouble of sending them their money in coin.

Whistler at a country house was very amusing. There was no one quite like him. He was unique. However good the chance of sport might be, no one ever went out shooting, and no one wanted to. At any time one entered the smoking room one saw him surrounded by a bevy of men, all fascinated with his stories of the latest scalped ones. Wherever Whistler went, he always found plenty of people to listen to the details of his quarrels and friendships, to wade through a mass of correspondence, and to read end-

AGNES

less press cuttings. On occasions Whistler had been known to drift out into the open and become a sportsman. A man told me that he once persuaded him to go out with a gun, and he told me he had not been out long before the most extraordinary thing happened. "Suddenly," he said, "Whistler had a marvellous chance. A large bird — it might have been a peacock — came sailing majestically up to him. I whispered to him, 'Now's your chance!' Whistler, having been brought up at West Point, knew all about loading. He soon loaded his gun, fixed his eyeglass, and fired; and — it was a most extraordinary coincidence, but — the next thing I realised was that my favourite dog was shot. Nothing more was said, and somehow or other we drifted back home. That was the only day's sport I ever had with Whistler." When I told the Master this story, he laughed, and said: "Yes: I did shoot the dog. It was a dog without artistic habits, and had placed itself badly in relation to the landscape. But," he added, "the good gentleman forgot to tell you that on the way home he emptied a full charge of shot into the leg of a boy."

Whistler had no sympathy whatever with the sportsman. He was too gentle to look upon the killing of animals as sport. In all his little quarrels he avoided using physical force wherever it was possible. His fighting, though humiliating to his adversary, was in reality nothing more forcible than the

fluttering of a dove. He loathed vulgarity of any kind, and war he looked upon as a terrible proceeding. Especially he disapproved of our mode of warfare. He held very decided views upon our latest war in South Africa. He considered that British conduct altogether was faulty. In fact, he maintained that nothing that was done in relation to South Africa was done well. "First of all," he would say in his whimsical way, "a Commander-in-Chief must be had. The authorities search the list. They find nothing in the A's. They come to the B's. Buller. Buller, now: what has Buller done? They refer back, and find that when Buller was at Eton he fought a butcher boy and licked him. Ha! ha! good muscle," and Whistler, in his dainty way, struck with his cane his forearm, — "muscle, muscle. This man had muscle; we English want muscle; so out goes Buller, the muscle man, without any regard to his fitness for the post, or to his local knowledge." That is the way, according to Whistler, that the British manage everything.

He was just as severe when he talked of all the European Powers in relation to China. "What are they doing out there?" he demanded. "Fighting against China, one of the most polite nations in the world, engaged in a war that will only result in this horde of impolite soldiers destroying a number of exquisite blue-and-white china pots!"

BROWN AND GOLD—"LILLIE IN OUR ALLEY"

From a water-colour drawing in the possession of J. J. Cowan, Esq.

As for the United States, he could find some excuse for their conduct in relation to the war with Spain, the most polite nation in Europe. Then he described, in his own inimitable way, how, after a famous battle, the Spanish Admiral was fished up out of his own sunken vessel and brought up on to the deck of an American battleship looking like — like — and Whistler paused awhile for a suitable description, — "well, for all the world like a clod of cotton-wool pulled out of an ink bottle, and was received by everyone on board with all the pomp and ceremony due to his position, as if he had just stepped on board to inspect his own ship."

Whistler had no Socialistic instincts. He was not by any means a Socialist. His only excuse for the masses was that they were a blot of colour to be painted. To overeducate them, he said, was absurd. The Master was a Tory. He did not quite know why; but, he said, it seemed to suggest luxury; and painters, he maintained, should be surrounded with luxury. He loved kings and queens and emperors, and had a feeling that his work should only be bought by royalty. Whistler was like a child in these matters. He was continually painting fantastic pictures of himself with a title. Once he said to me, "I wonder what it would feel like if the fishmonger opposite, when he brought in my bill, were to say, 'Your little account, Sir James.'"

Religion did not occupy the Master very much. His work was his religion, and that was perfectly pure. Still, he was a Spiritualist, and for years he pottered with table-turning and spirit-rapping. He used to tell me of the long talks he had with Dante Rossetti at nights, and the extraordinary things that used to happen. Once he was leaving the studio with a model, and suddenly he asked her to place her hands upon a certain table and use her will power. This she did, and very soon there was a great knocking and rapping on the table. "Gentle spirit, is it good?" — "No," said the spirit: "it is bad." — "Gentle spirit, don't come again," said the Master; and he promptly removed the table. One night we were sitting alone in his little cottage in Walham Green, talking, as usual, about people and gossip generally, when suddenly — it must have been about twelve or even later — there came a rap at the window — a sharp, keen rap — Ping! The Master sprang off his chair. "What is that?" he cried. Instantly I conceived a mischievous impulse, and, knowing his weakness for ghosts, thought I would frighten him. Silently I caught his eye, and moved my hand round in a semicircle, Whistler's gaze following, until I pointed to his long cane, which stood in a corner of the room. I knew he imagined that it was this cane that knocked at the window. Whistler gripped me by the arm. "For heaven's

THE MODEL, LYING DOWN

sake, don't say that, Menpes!" he urged; and, although it was already late, he kept me there for hours, talking and reassuring him. It was daylight before I was allowed to leave the house. The works of Edgar Allan Poe influenced Whistler immensely. His essays and writings benefited enormously by his contact with that clever man. He read very little — I never saw him read a book; — but he has told me many times that he much admired Bret Harte. In fact, he thought him a far greater literary genius than Dickens or Thackeray. Dickens he could find no excuse for at all.

No man knew his limitations better than Whistler. They affected both his literary work and his painting. He rarely undertook work that he could not do well. He was a little nervous concerning the delivery of his famous "Ten o'clock." Scores of times — I might almost say hundreds of times — he paced up and down the Embankment at nights repeating to me sentences from the marvellous lecture. He feared lest his voice should not carry, and certainly his performances at Prince's Hall never equalled those nightly ones by the side of the Thames.

THE BOY

First state, unique.

THE BOY

THE PAINTER

SWINBURNE

CHILD ON A COUCH

REFERENCE

THE PAINTER

For oils, Whistler, differing from most artists, never used a palette. He used a table with a polished top. Whistler felt that it was a hindrance to have a palette dangling on his fingers. The colours on his palette, when he did use one, he arranged in a manner which he maintained to be highly scientific. Beginning with flake white in the middle, on the left hand he placed lemon yellow, cadmium, yellow ochre, raw sienna, raw umber, burnt sienna, and ivory black; on the right, vermilion, Venetian red, rose madder, cobalt blue, and Antwerp. Thus, on one side he ran through the yellows, from light-yellow to browns; and on the other through the series of reds, beginning with vermilion and ending with madder. Then, the blues and the blacks were on separate sides. He placed the white in the middle: to keep the two groups apart.

When painting a life-size portrait, the Master began on a canvas previously prepared with flake white and ivory black, forming a neutral grey. He then spread on his palette, with a large brush, a great patch of the general flesh colour, and scrubbed that flesh tone on to the canvas in one patch. Thereupon he began to work the violets and the rose, carnation,

and pearly tones of the flesh into this local colour spread half over the palette. He never worked independent little patches of colour in different parts of the palette. Every detail, every tone of the flesh, was amalgamated and incorporated in this general mass, to preserve a oneness; and his picture was more than half painted on the palette.

Having charged his brush with the colour, he put it on the canvas cleanly and in one sweep. There was no attempt at what is called broken colour, which results in a series of accidents causing the picture finally to represent a Persian carpet rather than a face.

When Whistler's day's work was over, and one examined his palette, it was always beautiful, and merely a repetition of his picture. You saw the flesh tones, with the little touches of Antwerp blue that had been dragged into it at the last moment to suggest the veins, and the violets and the rose tones. You could trace every part of the picture on that palette. Even the eye became on the palette a mixed tone and a part of the flesh. So it was with every other part of the picture, — the dress, the background, the floor: — all the different tones were to be seen on the palette; even the shadows mingling with their own local colour, and becoming a part of it. Black, as a harmoniser, Whistler used with every tone. He was never without it. Even if he painted a white

NOTE IN BLUE AND OPAL—THE SUN CLOUD

From an oil-painting in the possession of W. Flower, Esq.

shirt front, black was always used; and when he painted a girl with pink bows, the bows would have black in them. This colour, used so continually, gave to Whistler's pictures a certain marvellous pearly grey quality which was one of the chief charms of his work. Then, of course, the grey-toned panel upon which he painted shone through the pigment and gave an added greyness.

Whistler never patched up his pictures. He never worked, as many painters do, day after day upon one small portion of a picture. To him such a method meant failure — the picture immediately became spotty. His only hope was to form a new skin entirely, to sweep off the last attempt, and begin afresh, each time he set to work. Often Whistler received as many as twenty or thirty sittings from one person, and at every sitting he began over again as at a new picture. The result was a oneness, a freshness, quite incomparable. Whistler worked always with great firmness. He held his brush firmly and pressed hard on the canvas. There was no "dainty touch" about Whistler's handling. He worked in clean and firm sweeps. For example, if in a portrait it were necessary to bring the background up to a figure, he would mix the tone of the background, and with a large brush well pressed into the canvas would draw the line confidently, and with one firm sweep from the head right down to the heel.

There was no trickery in the work. All the tones were put on in a crisp way with firmness; yet the tones came so close together in value that there was no suggestion of hard edges. As a rule, his figures were posed far into the atmosphere of the studio and more or less in gloom, while his canvas was in the light. Thus, in order to get a true representation of the model, he had to bring his tones very nearly to the same level. That is why most of Whistler's pictures appear to be what some people call flat.

I noticed that when working from a half tone to a shadow he always used raw sienna, and, as a medium, turpentine and linseed oil. He used very flowing colour; and even the most solid part of a picture, such as the whites in linen, were sufficiently transparent for the ground underneath to show. Whistler never loaded his pictures with pigment, but worked in thin films of colour.

He was not difficult to please in so far as posing was concerned. Almost any position a model took seemed to him a picture. There was no pulling about of drapery, no gazing through arched hands, no special placing of the body. He allowed the sitter to do what she liked, more or less, and arrested her whenever her pose formed a picture. He was generous to his sitters, and made them feel that they themselves were doing half the work.

I used often to marvel as I watched the slender

SKETCH OF A GIRL, NUDE

Second state, washed with Indian ink.

STEAMBOATS OFF THE TOWER

TWO SHIPS

Second state.

EDINBURGH
REFERENCE

figure of Whistler working upon such huge canvases, his sinuous fingers wielding such enormous brushes, almost as large as a house-painter's brushes. Everything he used in his painting was colossal — brushes, canvases, and a table for a palette. Carlyle, when he was being painted, was very much impressed with the outfit. "You are indeed a workman," he said: "your tools are the tools of the workman."

When one praised a picture of Whistler's, he was generally flattered; but in a way his feelings were hurt. He felt that it was unfair to his other pictures. In his opinion they were equally fine. He himself never weakened to such an extent as to praise one above another. That would cast a slight upon the rest. To mention the picture of the Mother always roused him. He would say, "Wait until the Sarasate is as old as the Mother, with a skin of varnish upon it that has mellowed, — then you will call that my *chef d'œuvre!*" When the Mother was freshly painted, no gallery wanted to hang it, and the Academicians thought that it was a black-and-white drawing.

In water colours Whistler always used Chinese white with every tone, to give body to the pigment — just as in his oil colours he used ivory black. But his water colours were very fair and delicate, whereas his oil colours were somewhat low-toned. In each medium he relied a good deal on the ground

he worked upon for the general tone of his picture. In water colours the white paper showed through, and in oil colours the grey tone of the canvas.

Whenever I was with him, Whistler and I used to make experiments. For example, we tried panels of brown paper, some varnished and some plain; and I was continually bringing him different boards to experiment upon, both in oil and in water colour. I remember once persuading the Master to try miniature painting on ivory. It was most amusing. I prepared the ivory and the brushes, and laid them out ready for his use. Whistler looked critically for some time, and then said: "Well, what's it all about? What have all these miniature people been doing, Menpes?" — "The great miniature painters," I answered, "used transparent colour, and sometimes a little gum in the shadows." — "Gum! gum!" cried Whistler. "We can't have gum. Don't they use white?" I firmly put down this suggestion. Whistler, I knew, was longing for body colour. I told him that miniature painters used white sparingly, because, naturally enough, they did not want to lose the quality of the priceless ground upon which they were working Whistler began by using transparent colour; but gradually he introduced white — he couldn't help it. He was painting a little head, which eventually was a perfectly delightful picture, though exactly the same as though it had been painted

THE PIANO

First proof, without butterfly.

SPEKE SHORE

on his own panels. Suddenly he drew himself up. "Why am I working on ivory?" he demanded. "Why am I not working on paper? This ground is slippery and unsympathetic." And, after all, it was useless, because the ivory was completely lost.

Pastel the Master revelled in, and this medium he treated very much as he treated oil colours and water colours. He began with a fine drawing in black chalk, a complete picture in itself; then he would heighten the drawing with a few simple tones, leaving as much of the brown paper as possible. He never worked upon a ground that required killing. That was a waste of time, he said, and a handicap: one could not procure clean crisp tones — it was necessary to go over them so many times.

For some of his pictures he had innumerable sittings. One instance was the painting called the "Blue Girl." The father of a family of three or four girls told me that each maiden in her turn, as she reached the desired age, had sat to Whistler for the same picture — until at last even the youngest had grown too old, and the picture was finished with a damsel from another family altogether. It was discouraging for sitters to come time after time, as they did, and always to find the work of the former sitting, which they imagined to be so fine, swept from the canvas, and an entirely new work begun. Sir Henry Irving has told me that he posed for

Whistler many times. At last, after having given him twenty sittings, and still finding the canvas swept and bare, except for a small piece of linen, he said, "How is it that in all these sittings I have given you you have only painted a piece of linen?"— "Ah," said Whistler; "but who save the Master could have painted that linen? Surely that is excuse enough."

Whistler hated parting with his work. It pained him to have to sell a picture. He loved it. Money seemed a poor consolation for its loss. He was in this respect a mere child. It was touching to watch him, when it became necessary to give away an etching or a water colour, trying to choose which one he should part with. He was like a mother with her little children — loving each one as much as another, hovering over his creations, fearful to choose. Once he had to select an etching to give as a present to his physician. He first laid eight or ten proofs out carefully on a sheet of white paper and placed them upon the table. "Now, Menpes," he said, "if you were me, which one would you choose to give the doctor?" Naturally, knowing the ways of the Master, I pointed to the one I thought least successful. Looking at me with affectionate approbation, Whistler murmured: "What instinct! Of course that is the only one — we must give him that proof." But even when it was chosen, and the finest proofs remained, he hated

"PINK AND ROSE"—THE MOTHER'S SLEEP

From a water-colour drawing in the possession of J. J. Cowan, Esq.

PUBLIC LIBRARY

parting with it. From that moment it possessed for him new beauties. He placed it apart on white paper, isolated it, and raved about it. "Why should I give it to the doctor?" I heard him mutter. By and by I saw him wrap it up, and put it away with the others. He looked curiously sheepish when he met my eye. This would occur over and over again, until at length Whistler consented to part with the proof.

Whenever he sold a picture, it was always from that moment a real work with him to try and get it back again — not because he was mean, but because, somehow, he felt that his work should be in the possession of the chosen few who really valued it. He would often say to me: "A dealer called to-day and wanted some proofs; but, of course, I could not let him have them — such things are only fit for crowned heads. This dealer neither loves nor understands them. A doctor — yes: from him it is possible to recover them; but a dealer — why, it is like losing a string from a violin!" Nevertheless, friends who really loved and appreciated Whistler's work could always procure it, no matter how poor they might be. Did he need money ever so badly, Whistler would invariably refuse the guinea of the dealer for the six shillings of a sympathetic friend.

One night he was to dine at a lady's house. Unfortunately, in the dining room was hanging one of his early pictures. This destroyed all chance of his

entertaining the guests by brilliant conversation. He spent the evening talking about his pictures, springing up now and then to peer into this one and caress it with his handkerchief. He loved it, and felt that it was not in sufficiently sympathetic hands. Towards the end of the evening he implored his hostess to send it round to his studio the next morning to be revarnished and cared for, and generally put into proper condition. The lady, in a trusting way, complied, and sent it to him. For years she wrote innumerable letters begging Whistler to send back her picture; but still it remained in the studio being cared for. He showed me the last letter he received, a charmingly sympathetic note, in which the lady said, "I can live no longer without my beautiful picture, and I am sending to have it taken away." — "Isn't it appalling?" he cried. "And she is presumably a woman of the world and of great habits!" I saw nothing appalling about it; but I murmured, "Extraordinary," thinking that that would more or less cover the situation. "Just think of it, Menpes!" Whistler continued in an excited voice. "Ten years ago this woman bought my picture for a ridiculously small sum, a mere bagatelle, a few pounds; she has had the privilege of living with this masterpiece for ten whole years; and now she has the presumption to ask for it back again. Pshaw! The thing's unspeakable!"

In his criticism of the work of other painters,

THE DAM WOOD

First proof.

EDINBURGH
REFERENCE
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ancient and modern, Whistler was very interesting. I have been many times with him to the National Gallery, and heard him talk technically of masterpieces there. He would turn his attention, perhaps, to a Rembrandt portrait, put his eyeglass on, and look closely into it all over, and then say: "It's gummy! It has a gummy, what you call a fat, juicy quality about it that I don't like." I can quite imagine people getting into a condition in which such a quality might appeal to them. To me Rembrandt was obviously a man of great facility; but I imagine he did not suffer much when he worked. Rembrandt never had wakeful nights because of technical difficulties — the sort of nights that every great painter must have. Up to a certain standpoint he accomplished thoroughly good work, and I must admit that he was a man who had what may be called his good days — days on which he produced what the world calls Rembrandt's masterpieces. "But," said Whistler, "these so-called masterpieces are not great works. They are pictures that you look at and are interested in merely because of their technical dexterity."

From Rembrandt we passed on to some of the smaller Dutch pictures. Catching sight of a little Terburg, Whistler pounced upon it with delight, and examined it intently. It might be a Dutch kitchen, and there would perhaps be only one small face in the tiny picture that appealed to him. "Ah," he would

say, "what have we here? Rembrandt has never painted anything to equal this little bit of flesh. Here we have no trick of the brush, no dexterity, no obviously marvellous technique; but the little lips, and the eyes, and the pearly tones of the shadows, all seem a part of the flesh tone, just as they are in nature; and it is so utterly simple that one is quite unaware of any apparent cleverness." Perhaps in this Terburg only this one piece of flesh appealed to Whistler. The rest of the portrait he would barely look at. "He's got it this time," you would hear him mutter; "but he does not understand blacks."

From room to room we went, not studying any particular school, but just picking out a picture here and a picture there, as it appealed to the Master. I was anxious to hear his opinion upon Turner, and, almost unconsciously perhaps, directed his steps to the room where the famous work was collected. Whistler put on his eyeglass, and looked very long and carefully at one or two pictures without saying a word. I felt that Turner's work must be touching him; but the Master shook his head, and said: "No: this is not big work. The colour is not good. It is too prismatic. There is no reserve. Moreover, it is not the work of the man who knows his trade. Turner was struggling with the wrong medium. He ought not to have painted. He should have written. Come from this work, which is full of uncertainty.

PRICE'S CANDLE WORKS

Very early proof.

BATTERSEA, DAWN

Early state.

A SKETCH FROM BILLINGSGATE

Second state.

WYCH STREET

Butterfly in pencil within plate mark, and signed
"Whistler 1st proof."

Come and look at the paintings of a man who was a true workman." So saying, he led me straight to a Canaletto. "Now," he said, "here is the man who was absolute master of his materials. In this work you will find no uncertainty." He talked of his drawing and of the crisp, clean way in which the tones were put on. "Do you know," he said earnestly and credulously, "there are people who maintain that the figures in pictures of Canaletto were painted by another man? Now, isn't that absurd? Of course those figures were painted by the master hand of Canaletto. Only he could have painted them. But then," Whistler broke off suddenly, "after all, what's the use? His work is as little understood as mine."

We looked at a Velasquez. Whistler said: "Here is another good workman. He, too, knew his trade and his tools. I place him upon the same plane as Canaletto. The two men run side by side. Their works are equally fine." He cast but a cursory glance upon the Italian pictures. I never could persuade him to linger with them. They did not appeal to him in the least, and even a Giorgione he scarcely recognised as being good work. The English school of Romneys, Gainsboroughs, and Reynolds he would not tolerate at all. For them he could find no place. Seldom could I induce him even to look at them. Once I stopped him in front of a Constable. "Yes," he said thoughtfully: "what an athletic gentleman he must

have been! And how enamoured he evidently was with his palette knife! Many a happy day, I warrant, Constable spent with that palette knife, and then — O dear! the country — how wearied one must get of green trees!"

Just as we were leaving the gallery, Whistler caught sight of a row of Turner's. "What a series of accidents!" I heard him murmur.

Once, only once, I went to the Royal Academy with Whistler. The visit discouraged him terribly. He looked round upon the pictures. "This exhibition," he said, "is enervating and discouraging beyond words. Here is a collection of pictures which is, of course, common and interesting work for the most part; but there is a certain smart handling, a certain superficial cleverness and facility. Do you know, Menpes, I couldn't do that?" Of course, he was right. He realised how hard it was for him to produce an effect. It did not come easily to him. He often placed a picture on an easel and talked about it in an airy way, as if it had been blown on; but, as a matter of fact, it was invariably the result of extreme care and pains. It was characteristic of the man to be disturbed and troubled about work which really did not count at all. "How foolish that trick of the brush is!" he would say; adding, in the same breath, "But how does he do it, Menpes, do you think?"

I remember once examining some water colours

NOCTURNE—AMSTERDAM IN SNOW

From a water-colour drawing in the possession of
J. J. Cowan, Esq.

with Whistler at the Fine Art Society. They were pictures of Venice, and painted in clear, transparent, flowing tones, with great dexterity. It struck one that the man had accomplished everything he had intended. Whistler told me that he had met this man while he was painting in Venice. He himself was then working upon those marvellous pastels on brown paper which are now invaluable. This artist happened to be staying at the hotel, and he made a foolish bet that he could go out at once and produce pastels which would be as fine as, if not finer than, those of the Master. Whistler accepted the challenge; and the man went out and brought back, with great assurance and in a surprisingly short space of time, a series of pastels on brown paper which he considered to be as fine as, if not finer than, those of the Master. He himself unblushingly asserted that he considered the drawing to be cleaner and crisper, and the colour finer, than Whistler's. When the work of the two artists was laid side by side and submitted to the judgment of the painters in Venice, the unfortunate stranger was wiped off the face of the earth, as it were, and the verdict was given unanimously in favour of the Master's pastels. Still, Whistler was struck by a quality about them which, though superficial, was dexterous. "This," he said, "is obviously the work of a man who could work and smoke at the same time and call it a pleasing art."

TEMPLE BAR

Trial proof.

TEMPLE BAR

THE ETCHER

THE THAMES TOWARDS ERITH

FROM PICKLED-HERRING STAIRS

Trial proof, without dry point.

FROM PICKLED-HERRING STAIRS

THE ETCHER

Many people look upon Whistler more as an etcher than as a painter. That was for a simple reason. Whistler's pictures have been bought only by the few, and are exhibited at galleries but rarely. His etchings, on the other hand, are scattered broadcast in hundreds of homes and exhibitions. Therefore, it is his etchings, not his pictures, that have gained for him the universal admiration and recognition of the world. From his very earliest days Whistler was an etcher. I met at a dinner-party a lady who went to a quaint little school with Whistler when they were both very young. Regularly every day small Jimmie would escort her home, and was continually bringing her little love poems and drawings, many of which she possesses now. She remembers well one examination time when they all, both boys and girls, had to draw maps. Little Whistler drew a map so extraordinary that she begged him to give it to her after it had been exhibited at the school. She thought there never was such a map — so beautifully drawn, every little town and village clearly marked with all the delicacy and beauty of his etchings of Venice.

As a lad he was set to engrave maps for the Coast Survey. He had never done such work before, but was given a copper plate and all the necessary tools. He started to make an elaborate drawing, mathematically accurate, the work of an expert engineer draughtsman. He drew in clean lines that suggested the work of the graver. It was marvellous mechanical work. But Whistler must needs show his individuality even here. Almost unconsciously, for the purpose, first of all, of trying his point, he began to spread himself on the margin, sketching exquisite, characteristic figures, free in line and crisply drawn. They were typical little Whistlers such as we know now. He began even at that early age as an etcher. Unfortunately, this plate, when finished, was placed in the etching bath during Whistler's absence from the office, without any attempt at stopping out the marginal notes. The result was a print which staggered the principal. Young Whistler was called before him for an explanation. In answering to his superior, he took the line that became habitual. He considered it a presumption in anyone to dare tamper with the work of an artist. The margin was a very suitable place on which to try his point. He himself should have been allowed to "bite in" the plate. As a matter of fact, it was a very providential coincidence that Whistler's map was plunged into the acid bath, marginal sketches and all. The lovely little figures

MASTER MENPES

From a water-colour drawing in the possession of
Mrs. Menpes.

were obviously of so much greater merit than the mechanical drawing that he became convinced of the magnitude of his own prowess. In this way he began his brilliant career as an etcher.

It was in connection with Whistler as an etcher that I first came into contact with him. He had just returned from Venice after having created that marvellous series of Venetian etchings, the lagoons and the nocturne palaces. It was at a period when Whistler as an etcher was really at his height — when he was creating his finest masterpieces. At about that time I was working under E. J. Poynter at the South Kensington Schools; and I remember well, as if it were but yesterday, my first meeting with Whistler. He was in a little room at the Fine Art Society — a room which had been set apart for him to print a series of twelve plates, a commission from the Society. The moment I saw him I realised that I had at last come into contact with a master. I became conscious that I was meeting face to face one of the greatest painters living. From that hour I was almost a slave in his service, ready and only too anxious to help, no matter in how small a way. I took off my coat there and then, and began to grind up ink for the Master. I forgot the Schools — these were finished and over for ever. I never went back again — I simply fagged for Whistler and gloried in the task.

By and by from this little room at the Fine Art

Society the Master drifted into a room in my own house which I had fitted up with printing materials, and it was in this little printing room of mine that most of the series of Venetian etchings were printed. Here it was that Whistler taught me the art of etching, and it was seeing these plates printed day after day that first gave me a real insight into Whistler. The care with which he etched a plate was extraordinary. Sometimes he spent half an hour endeavouring to procure a true point on his needle, one that would not tear the copper. And then his method of biting in a plate was totally different from that of anyone else. He used nitric acid. There was one period, to be sure, when he used hydrochloric; but it did not last for long. The nitric, he found, gave a slightly rougher line, fuller in colour. Then, Whistler never dipped a plate into an acid bath in the usual manner. He poured the acid upon the surface of the copper, and played it about by means of a feather, for all the world as if he were at work on a black-and-white drawing — only, the feather end was used instead of the quill. Thus, he produced infinite variety; although, no doubt, it entailed more labour. Unlike Rembrandt, and unlike most artists, who start with etching at the beginning of their lives and finish up with dry-point, Whistler mingled the two methods usually; but there was one period, a middle period, when he produced a whole series of pure dry-points.

LORD WOLSELEY

Curiously enough, towards the end of his life the dry-point almost disappeared, and was rarely used even as an auxiliary.

Whistler maintained that the etcher should print his own plate. In that, as in most things, he was perfectly right. The work is not complete until it has been printed. We judge of it not from the copper, but from the printed proof; and, as that printing requires the handling of an artist just as much as would a water-colour drawing, it is obvious that when a professional printer prints a plate it becomes the work of two men instead of one, which on the face of it cannot be right. Collaboration was an abomination to the Master. The printing of an etching is not like the printing of a visiting card. It is for the etcher alone to decide whether, for example, the brilliant black lines should be placed upon a golden ground of Dutch paper, or whether they should be enveloped in a deep tone. Much of Whistler's etched work was done on the bench while he was actually printing. I have seen him print twelve proofs, and every proof a state. He would continually keep adding dry-point and scraping, and, as he himself would say, caressing the plate into form. Once Whistler sent a few of his plates to be printed by a professional printer, and I was fortunate enough to be with him when they arrived at the studio. In the packet of proofs there was not one that in the least

resembled a Whistler proof. All the delicacy and the distinction of his etchings seemed to have gone. They were cheap, common, and practically valueless. It was obvious that the plates had been wiped with a metallic hand, in a hard sweeping movement, until the surface of the plate was cleansed mechanically. Then the ink had been dragged up to procure what the printer proposed to call a rich full proof — a proof that Whistler called gummy and treacly. And here I should like to warn the collector against these professionally printed proofs — the shiny, brown, and vulgar vellum proofs which, now that the Master has gone, will probably come on the market. I should like to impress upon him that plates so printed cease to be the work of the Master, and are therefore valueless from the collector's standpoint. My only prayer is that the plates may be destroyed, or presented to a museum, and that the professional printer will never be allowed to touch them. After examining these proofs, Whistler turned to me and said, "Menpes, destroy them;" and there and then I set to work and tore the entire stack of proofs to ribbons. That was Whistler's last attempt at collaboration with professional printers.

Now I will endeavour to give a slight sketch, not too technical, of Whistler's method of printing. To begin with, he always insisted upon having old paper — preferably Dutch, because of a quality it gave to

IRVING AS PHILIP OF SPAIN

First trial proof.

IRVING AS PHILIP OF SPAIN

Second trial proof.

IRVING AS PHILIP OF SPAIN

First state of the plate, undescribed in Wedmore's Catalogue.

IRVING AS PHILIP OF SPAIN

With dry point added, undescribed in Wedmore's Catalogue.

the ink which cannot be imitated. It is of a texture which only age can produce. The texture of paper changes considerably with age. As years go on all traces of size disappear; yet you feel that at one time it must have contained a considerable quantity. It has been proved over and over again by practical experiment that for etchings old paper is preferable to new. Rembrandt and all the great etchers have found it so. Whistler spent endless time searching for it. Often he and I passed weeks in Holland poking about antiquated book shops; sometimes finding a large collection, sometimes only a single sheet. On occasions, after having discovered a stack of three or four thousand sheets, I have seen Whistler literally tremble with excitement and scarcely know how to ask the price for joy. Then, when the Master had made a purchase, he and I would stagger to the hotel under the weight of a huge parcel, rather than run the slightest risk of losing it. Whistler perfectly understood the value of the tone of the paper upon which he printed, and always preserved a fairness of tone. He rarely overbit a plate or sullied the golden tone of the paper with too much work. He realised that a flat tone of old Dutch paper mounted on a Whatman's board was a beautiful bit of decoration in itself, having more artistic merit than nine-tenths of the ropy foolish etchings which are constantly produced. In many of his plates there is no attempt at a big design, but

simply a lacework of exquisite lines so fair and delicate that the broad tone of golden paper is preserved. Having provided himself with this Dutch paper, Whistler's next care was in the preparation of the ink — the choice of blacks and browns. One of the blacks he used was made from the dregs of port wine, and his favourite brown was simple burnt umber. Then came the mixing of the oil and the powder into exactly the right consistency, the damping of the paper in such a manner that it was neither too wet nor too dry, the difficulty of procuring the right temperature of a plate, and the wiping of it. Now, the wiping of one of Whistler's plates required quite as much skill as the painting of a picture. No part of a plate was ever wiped quite clean: there were always films of colour left. Whistler was most particular in the smallest detail connected with the printing of a plate. He took as long a time to trim the margin of a proof as any other printer would have taken to print it. He had a method of his own by which he cut away the margin and left a little tag upon which he placed his butterfly. Over this cutting away of the margin Whistler was exceedingly particular. I have often seen him work laboriously at a proof with a knife on a piece of glass for a long time, carefully following round the edge of it, just touching the plate mark, without even a ruler or any mechanical means to procure a clean cut. "I use no ruler," said

TROUVILLE—BLUE AND SILVER

From an oil-painting in the possession of
J. J. Cowan, Esq.

he, in answer to a question, "because I wish the knife to follow sympathetically the edge of the proof. Even the cutting of this paper, although you may not know it, is vibrated and full of colour. There is just as great a difference between my trimming of a proof and the trimming of a professional cutter as there is in etching between a wiry line and a full rich one."

No one was ever quite like Whistler in this respect — so exquisitely dainty and careful over the smallest detail. Then, again, he always studied the artistic placing of his butterfly upon a proof, in order to create the perfect balance of an etching. He taught me many a valuable lesson in this respect. In fact, Whistler seldom placed his butterfly on a proof without first saying to me, "Now, Menpes, where do you think the butterfly is going this time?" It used to be a little joke between us, and after some months of habit I was invariably able to put my finger on the spot where the butterfly would create the balance of the picture.

To the student who reads this chapter and is sincerely interested technically in the printing of etchings, I should like to explain Whistler's method of printing; and I shall divide his work up into periods.

First of all, in his very early periods of printing, he loved the full black proof. Then there came the dry-point period, when he inclined to the cool and silvery side, with a quality suggestive of pastel. In

a later period, at the time of the Venice plates, when he was printing those marvellous nocturne palaces, his pigment became warmer in tone. Last of all, still with a love for rich colour, Whistler wiped his plates cleanly: the lines were less full, less charged with ink: the ideal proofs of this period were suggestive of ivory. I have often looked over portfolios of Whistler's etchings with the Master himself, and sometimes I have persuaded him to talk and give me reasons for the changes in his methods, and have asked him to tell me how he produced certain effects. For printing in those days became a passion with me. It had possession of me, and I was never weary of questioning Whistler with regard to his methods. We would look, perhaps, at some proofs of the early French set of 1858 and 1859 — proofs which had in all probability been printed by Delatre. They might be proofs from the plate called "The Kitchen." Whistler would look at them, and say: "Well, well, well! Not bad, not bad! But I have learnt something since then, I think, Menpes. At that time I struggled to get tone with my etchings in a laboured way." Delatre's printing, Whistler always maintained, was far finer than that of any English professional printer. "Delatre," he would say, "had the wit to work for a flatted surface, instead of the ghastly, glassy varnish so loved here in England." He explained to me how that Delatre, to procure

BATTERSEA BRIDGE

this effect, always used unburnt oil; "but," he said, "good as these proofs undoubtedly are, they have one grave fault, which applies to the printing of nearly every professional, and that is the struggle to procure that terrible quality which is called richness. They none of them can resist retroussage — they all must needs drag the copper with the muslin to form what they call a full line. Every printer, even Delatre, overdragged." Then, perhaps, in turning over the proofs, we would come across one of the Master's own printing, a dry-point looking like a fair beautiful pastel in quality. This interested him. "Ha, ha!" he would say. "Now, here is a proof that could only have been printed by one man — myself," looking at me with an encouraging smile as if to say, "You are doing very well." With great care he would place it on a large sheet of Whatman's paper, in order by its whiteness to give full value to the golden tone of the Dutch paper on which the proof was printed. He would then lay it on the floor and talk of it critically — choosing the floor to allow him to examine the picture as a whole from a distance. I remember him once placing side by side with his own work a plate from Hamerton's "Etching and Etchers." He simply laid the two together and laughed. He said not a word — no explanation was necessary. One, from a distance, looked a meaningless jumble of black-and-white spots, which might have been anything from a

coal-scuttle to a fire-escape; the other, although it was very slight, — a long slim line of Venetian palaces, or a slight study of a nude figure, — had about it strength and breadth, and was a decorative pattern. By and by Whistler would take up a proof of a nocturne palace with a deep rich tone all over it, as deep as a mezzotint, and say, as he looked at it: "How hopeless it would be to try and procure this tone by any mechanical roughening of the surface of the copper! Such a result is only possible by leaving films of tone upon the plate."

In this book I reproduce, in a few instances, a series of proofs from one plate in order to show the thoroughness of the Master, and to demonstrate his method of correcting a plate. A notable example of this will be found in the etching of Maud standing. There are five different proofs from the one plate. In the first, Maud wears a fichu of pleated stuff; in the second the fichu is charcoaled out, and a fur tippet indicated; in the third there is a tone over the tippet; in the fourth he does away with the tippet altogether; and in the fifth and final proof, when he adds his butterfly, the tippet, full and rich in colour, is brought back again. I have reproduced this series of proofs to demonstrate Whistler's thoroughness and determination, and to show the technical difficulties against which he had often to contend. It is obvious that the Master must have suffered over this particular

WHISTLER WITH THE WHITE LOCK

EDINBURGH
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plate: the point did not flow freely. Then, again, I have also reproduced some proofs of Irving as Charles I. This is a very exceptional series. Here one finds Whistler battling with the same picture on two different plates. One might imagine that the four proofs were all printed from the same plate; but two were printed from one plate, and two from another.

At one period of my intimacy with Whistler I seemed to live in the printing room day and night. From grinding up ink I developed and developed until at last I was able to print for him myself. Once — how well I remember! — that morning seemed to mark the beginning of a new epoch in my life — everything seemed to be going wrong, and I was rapidly becoming hopeless. It seemed as though I should never be able to print a satisfactory proof. Luckily for me, it was a bad day for the Master also. He was printing one of his nocturne palaces, and was not at all satisfied with the results. Whistler often had days when proof after proof was printed and failure attended each. On this particular morning he was feeling exceptionally discouraged, and, as all great men are at times, he was in the depths of despair. At last he turned to me, and said half jokingly, "Why don't you try and print a palace, Menpes?" I was overjoyed. The chance of printing one of the Master's plates was bliss too great for

my immediate comprehension. Eventually I began. I inked the plate, wiped it, and pulled the first proof; and from that day to this I have never forgotten my nervousness as I took the proof from off the plate, and laid it upon a sheet of white paper, aping the Master. I begged that Whistler would turn his back while my first attempt was carefully spread out and placed in position. When the proof had been prepared, he put on his eyeglass, looked at it, and said, "Amazing! Try another." Such praise from the Master flattered me immensely, and from that day onward I printed constantly for Whistler.

In his own delightful way, he would explain that, after all, it was not I who was printing them. "Your hands, I know, Menpes, are doing the work, and your palm wipes the plate; but it is my mind, the mind of the Master, that is in the work, making it possible for you to do it. I have educated and trained you, and have created an atmosphere which enables you to carry out my intentions exactly as I myself should. You are but the medium translating the ideas of the Master."

Often Whistler would turn up at my studio early in the afternoon, and tell me that he wanted twenty proofs printed from a certain plate, wearing canary-coloured kid gloves and not looking at all like a printer. After directing me as to the mixing of the

THE LARGE POOL

PUTNEY BRIDGE

ink, and generally getting the work in full swing, he usually suggested that I should continue printing for the rest of the day, and went off to a garden party. A few hours afterwards he would call for the proofs, and be so stimulating and encouraging in his praise that one felt amply repaid for the work.

A NUDE STUDY

From a pastel in the possession of Edmund Davis, Esq.

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THE BRITISH ARTISTS

SAN BIAGIO

BEAD STRINGERS

WHISTLER as President of an Art Society was infinitely witty. He carried out his character of purist to a remarkable extent. In a word, he figuratively took off his coat and set to work to cleanse the Society with the hot water and soft soap of his own good taste. It was an exceedingly interesting experiment. I would not have missed one of those memorable meetings. At times I laughed until I cried, while my mirth was drowned by the angry shouts and complaints of the members about me.

Never has there been, and probably there never will be again, such a president as Whistler. He was unique. As to the duties of his position, he was not quite clear; but he had in his mind certain things of which he wished to speak. The result was disastrous. The President at a meeting is supposed to encourage the members to talk, and give their opinions; but that was not Whistler's idea. He sat in the President's chair and talked himself. He talked for hour upon hour. He was brilliant, flowing, caustic. Was this the same man whom they had elected as President? the members whispered one to another, — this epigrammatic person who talked not to them but at them?

One of the first things Whistler did was to make a member of myself. He took me under his wing, as it were, and engineered me into the Society in an incredibly short time. Myself and a few others, all friends of his, Whistler gathered together and formed into an inner circle, whose sacred duty it was to fight for the Master and protect him. On the night before one of the exhibitions we met at his studio, where he explained his plan for cleansing the Society. I, as a member of the Hanging Committee, was instructed to be ruthless in rejecting pictures. He impressed upon me the necessity of saying, "Out, damned spot!" "Never weary, Menpes, of saying 'Out.' If you are uncertain for a moment, say 'Out.' You need never be afraid of rejecting a masterpiece. We want clean spaces round our pictures. We want them to be seen. The British Artists' must cease to be a shop." And out they went, one after the other, until very few and select were the pictures reserved for the exhibition. But these few were hung faultlessly, and in a decorative pattern, with plenty of wall space round each of them. Undoubtedly the pictures were shown at their best advantage. Whistler started by redecorating the gallery, "cleansing" it, as he himself said, procuring a neutral tone, and rejecting all other hangings and decorations. It was an exhibition on Whistler's lines. We used muslin to festoon with. Unfortunately, tow-

NOCTURNE—PALACES

THE BRIDGE

ards the ceiling it ran short, and certain of the battens were left exposed; but time was valuable, and Whistler allowed the omission to pass. I suggested that perhaps the critics might complain: they might call the gallery unfinished and a skeleton. Whistler imperiously waived my objection upon one side. "What matter?" he said. "If they complain, we can simply tell them that the battens form decorative lines and are well placed." In a very short time he had quite convinced himself and all of us that these exposed battens were indispensable to the scheme of decoration. But somehow or other the neutral tone of the walls, and the decorative hanging, did not seem to appeal to the average British Artist. The Society felt that, although artistically they might be improving by leaps and bounds, financially they were becoming just as rapidly ruined. Still, all these men had in their hearts a great, though reluctant, regard for the Master as critic and as painter, perhaps as critic especially.

On the morning of the first exhibition, when the pictures had been hung and the arrangements completed, all the members assembled in the gallery to await the arrival of the Master. He was late, and many were the nervous conjectures as to what he would say concerning such-and-such a picture — whether he would praise or condemn it. At length it was said that the Master had arrived. There was

intense excitement. We were self-conscious, yet tried to appear at ease. The Master entered, faultlessly dressed, walking with a jaunty step, evidently delighted with himself and the world in general. He passed down the gallery humming a French chanson, and, never noting the members, walked straight up to his own picture. There he stayed for quite fifteen minutes, regarding it with a satisfied expression, stepping now backward, now forward, canting his head, dusting the surface of the glass with a silk pocket-handkerchief. We watched him open-mouthed. Suddenly he turned round, beamed upon us, and cried enthusiastically, "Bravo, Jimmy!" Then he took my arm and hurried me out of the gallery, talking rapidly of the luncheon we were about to have.

Whistler was very amusing in his attempts to "cleanse" the Society in the teeth of opposition from the British Artists themselves. He left not a stone unturned to complete their artistic triumph. The smallest detail was treated by him as important. For example, of the Society's notepaper and the stamp upon it, Whistler did not approve. Immediately he designed another, a small red lion, decorative and dainty in the extreme. On the first proof sent from the stationers he wrote to me a little letter. To show what a joyous, light-hearted, almost boyish man the Master could be on occasions, I will repeat it.

"I write on the official sheet, O dear and most

A NUDE STUDY

From a pastel in the possession of Edmund Davis, Esq.

EDINBURGH
REFERENCE

respectful one, because I am in love with the look of it. Isn't it really brilliant and fascinating as a picture? And my little red lion — isn't he splendid and well placed?

"What's the use!"

This letter I have kept, as, indeed, I have kept and cherished all Whistler's letters.

Then, again, the signboard was a cruel thorn in the Master's side for fifteen minutes, during which he regarded it in sorrow before he ultimately had it displaced and sent off to his studio, where with a few sweeps of his brush he rapidly transformed the Rickett's-blue enamel-and-white lettering of the original into vermilion, bearing upon it a lion, the sign of the Society, and a cleverly drawn, well-placed, large butterfly. The Society of British Artists, printed in small block letters, did not at all interfere with the harmony of the whole. But this seemed to add the final touch to the oppression of the British Artists. This signboard was the last straw. They became exasperated. Whistler's ideas were too pure for the Society. He was cleansing them too thoroughly. The Society rebelled. There was a strong agitation to depose Whistler and place another in his stead.

The rebellion culminated at a meeting. Two or three fluent speakers attacked Whistler on the ground of his having impaired the dignity of the Society. They accused him of having brought too many eccen-

tricities among them. It was impossible, they said, to keep pace with such ideas. Also, their pictures were not selling. Whistler's answer was stupendous. He withered them as they sat there — withered them; and turned to grind his heel on the faded fragments of the fight. He put on his eyeglass and cast upon this circle of British Artists a slow, comprehensive, meditative stare. Then, at length, he said sweetly, and with some concern: "You know, you people are not well! You remind me of a ship-load of passengers living on an antiquated boat which has been anchored to a rock for many years. Suddenly this old tub, which hitherto has been disabled and incapable of putting out to sea, to face the storm and stress of the waves, is boarded by a pirate. (I am the pirate.) He patches up the ship and makes her not only weather-tight, but a perfect vessel, and boldly puts out, running down less ably captained ships, and bearing a stream of wreckage in her wake. But lo and behold! her triumphant passage is stopped, and by the passengers themselves. Unused to this strange and unaccustomed movement, they are each and every one of them sick — ill. But, good people, you will e'en live to thank your captain. But then you talk of my eccentricities. Now, you members invited me into your midst as President because of these same so-called eccentricities which you now condemn. You elected me because I was much talked about and because you

UPRIGHT VENICE

LITTLE COURT

THE RIVA, NUMBER TWO

imagined I would bring notoriety to your gallery. Did you then also imagine that when I entered your building I should leave my individuality on the door-mat? If so, you are mistaken. No, British Artists: I am still the same eccentric Whistler whom you invited into your midst."

So the conversazione continued. It was a big fight from start to finish. Whistler made a dramatic exit, taking with him in his triumphant train quite a number of British Artists. His parting words were, "I am taking with me the Artists, and I leave the British." Many were the gaping wounds he left behind him, and almost innumerable the scalps and trophies of the chase he hung upon his walls.

Unfortunately, just about this time a coolness, quite a slight one, had sprung up between Whistler and myself. I had retired about two months before the dramatic exit. I remember that night well, sitting alone at the Hogarth Club, eating a light supper, and seeing Whistler sail into the room in the brightest possible spirits, bringing with him the purified Artists. This was on the very night when he had been deposed. His train consisted of a small detachment that had sent in their resignations. There they were, seated at a big table drinking champagne, and loudly exalting the Master. Whistler seemed quite indifferent, but gay and debonnair. In his hand he held a swinging toy like a policeman's rattle that tinkled out "Yankee

Doodle." I sat quietly at my little table by the window and watched the party, longing to be one of them and feeling hopelessly in the cold. My transgression was that I had left the sinking ship two months before the Master; and I was therefore termed by him "the early rat." I felt somehow that he had not forgotten me. I caught him looking once or twice in my direction. At length he could restrain himself no longer, and called to me, "I say, Menpes, come over here." Once having forgiven, Whistler was never churlish. He made way for me and seated me on his right. I was once more his friend and devoted slave, and felt again, as indeed I was, a privileged and happy person. I shall never forget that long line of cleansed Artists. In a way it was a pathetic picture. They all felt that life was indeed worth living. They imagined that a brilliant future was before them with the Master at their head. I whispered to Whistler, "What are you going to do with them?" Whistler looked at me for a moment, and a quizzical smile curled his lips and twinkled in his eyes. "Pshaw, Menpes!" he cried. "Lose them, of course."

Whistler visited the gallery of the British Artists, with an escort of followers, shortly after abdicating. He saw a picture by a well-known Royal Academician.

"Ah," he said, as he stood looking at it through his eyeglass, "it is like a diamond in the sty."

CHELSEA SHOPS

From a water-colour drawing in the possession of
J. J. Cowan, Esq.

EDINBURGH
REFERENCE
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THE ONE-MAN SHOW

THE BALCONY

GARDEN

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LONG VENICE

THE ONE-MAN SHOW

One of the most interesting periods of my friendship with Whistler was at a time when I had the privilege of being of some small assistance to him during three of his exhibitions. In the arrangement of his work Whistler showed himself to be more than ever a purist. It was a revelation to me. I had never imagined that one human being could be so completely a master in minute details. He missed nothing, absolutely nothing, and he dominated to an extraordinary extent.

First of all there were the choosing of the pictures and the framing of them. Whistler's frame maker, when he first employed him, was an ordinary workman; but very soon, under the influence of the Master, he became an impressionist. (He felt that he must spread himself somewhere, and his impressionism took the form of music — in short, he learnt to play the violin.) The next work was to cut the pictures to fit their frames. This was invariably a terribly trying time both to Whistler and to the people by whom he was surrounded. Often he was in such frantic excitement that he has said to me: "Look here, Menpes: you take the pictures and

cut them in the way you think best. I leave it to you; but, for heaven's sake, don't let me see them before they are framed."

When the pictures had been framed and sent round to the gallery, Whistler, with much care, would arrange them on the ground so as to form a decorative bit of placing. And thus they would be hung. Whistler, himself, always superintended the smallest detail in his exhibition. The colouring of the room was arranged in accordance with the pictures; so also were the hangings, which were festooned in beautiful lines around the gallery. The Private View card was the object of much care and consideration. Such details as the cut of the lettering and the placing of the type were all-important. Whistler would actually go to the length of training a member of the printing firm especially to put a touch of colour on the butterfly by hand. At one of the exhibitions there was a picture called "The Blue Girl," which occupied a central position on one of the walls. At the last moment, early on the morning of the Press Day, Whistler came to the conclusion that he was not pleased with the painting of the mouth. Immediately he mounted upon a ladder and began to retouch it. It was terrible to watch him. He kept on painting the mouth, rubbing it out and repainting it; still it mocked and defied him. It seemed like a living thing. It

THE ANGRY SEA

From an oil-painting in the possession of
J. J. Cowan, Esq.

changed continually. Sometimes it would simper, and sometimes the lips would curl in a sneer. After a time the picture lost its freshness. Whistler would now and then deceive himself into thinking he was satisfied. He would climb down from his ladder, and say to me: "Isn't that fine now? Much better than it was. I am not going to touch it again." No sooner had I turned my back than up he would climb and set to work to rub out the mouth and paint it in as though for dear life. By and by he became nervous and sensitive. The whole exhibition seemed to centre on that one mouth. It developed into a nightmare. At length, in despair, he dashed it out with turpentine, and fled from the gallery just as the first critic was entering.

There was an exhibition called "Flesh Colour and Grey." Whistler decided that the decorations for this exhibition should be of flesh colour and grey alone. He insisted upon the colour scheme overflowing a little into Bond Street and oozing out *via* the "chucker-out," whose uniform was to be grey with flesh-colour facings. After a month of standing outside Whistler's show, the man was touched with the Master's enthusiasm. Eventually he became one of his most earnest students. He was constantly to be heard expounding Whistlerian theories to his open-mouthed cronies round the corner. I overheard him one day asking a superior if he should clean the

"toney" from off the windows, — "dirt" being absent from Whistler's vocabulary, — a word which was always translated into "tone." The poor fellow was completely demoralised when the exhibition was over. Feeling that he was quite unfitted for his career as "chucker-out," he drifted off into a new life, never to return to his old haunts.

When all the pictures had been hung to Whistler's satisfaction, he gave us a little dinner at the Arts Club, — Walter Dowdeswell, who was a most sincere and enthusiastic admirer of the Master, myself, and another. We were gathered for the purpose of pricing the pictures, and we drank a wine of which I have never known the name. All I remember is that it was cheap, sparkling, and not champagne; it was, I think, what is commonly known as "artists' wine." Ill-natured people who were not of the party whispered "gooseberry"; but that suggestion, I feel sure, was due to the promptings of envy. At any rate, its stimulating effect upon us was great. After dinner the pictures were priced, and with each additional bottle that was placed upon the table the prices mounted higher and higher. A picture of a shop painted in St. Ives, called "The Blue Band," was held out for our inspection. We gazed at it for some time in silence. Dowdeswell said boldly, "£40," and then looked uncertainly round the table with a scared expression as if to say, "What have I said?" Whis-

FURNACE NOCTURNE

THE SMITHY

tler put on his eyeglass, and surveyed him critically. After more sipping I suggested £50. The Master received the remark quite calmly. He seemed now to be indifferent, and left all discussion to his followers. But the colder he grew, the more enthusiastic we waxed, until at last Dowdeswell said, in a burst of enthusiasm, "Well, if the public doesn't care to give £60 for the picture, far better would it be to live with it."—"Quite right, Walter," said Whistler, approvingly, "quite right. I see you have appreciation. It is, as you say, a supremely fine work." Then I became excited. "I should make it £80," I cried in a nervous, spasmodic way, as though I were taking a header into a cold pool. Whistler looked at me benignly. "I like these bush instincts, Menpes," he said. "Yes: I distinctly like them." He himself did not drink much; and never was he calmer, cooler, more collected. Somehow his coolness spurred us on to fresh efforts. Our enthusiasm mounted to fever heat. In the end "The Blue Band" was priced at £120.

So we continued throughout the evening. The pictures were priced at what seemed to be fabulous sums. None of us, of course, realised that under the influence of drink we had really become prophetic: that we were placing Whistler on a plane where he should be. To outsiders the prices seemed ridiculously extravagant. We ourselves had misgivings next

morning when the catalogue was printed, and the east wind was blowing, and we were away from the wine. It was Press Day. I arrived on the scenes very early — at half-past nine, when the gallery was scarcely open. Dowdeswell joined me, and together we paced before the pictures on the wall. We looked at each other, and at the exhibition, critically, but in dead silence. Neither of us uttered a word. We would not have admitted it for the world; but there was no doubt about it — in the cold daylight we were thoughtful and depressed. Brilliant and sparkling, the Master entered, and, with a few words, picked us up again. He knew the value of his own work, and he soon impressed us with his views, — dealers and all. He hypnotised the dealers, as he did everyone else; and they worked for him loyally. They showed the right spirit. It mattered little to them whether they sold the Master's work or not. They felt that it was sufficient privilege merely to exhibit them. Whistler literally bubbled over with joy. "Now," he said, "I can't have this. You must smile. Be merry, laugh, all of you!" Dealers and pupils mechanically worked up smiles to please the Master. It was splendid. The Master swept one rapid glance round the gallery. "There is," he said, "only one thing lacking, gentlemen, to complete the picture which this gallery should create. And that is the butterfly — a large painted butterfly on the wall." There and

NOCTURNE—SALUTE

then a ladder was brought. Whistler wished the butterfly to be almost on the ceiling. It was an anxious moment, — the Master aloft on a tall ladder, breathless disciples below. The ladder jolted, and Whistler bobbed as he aimed at the wall with his long brush; but each bob caused a stroke in the right direction, and in shorter time than it takes to tell the butterfly was caught, as it were, on the wing. It was obvious to everyone that the Whistler butterfly had pulled the exhibition together.

It was amusing to watch Whistler when the journalists began to arrive. Unless a critic was sympathetic, the Master treated him with scorn. An antagonistic man was torn to ribbons before he left the gallery; scarcely a shred of him was left to show to the world that he had once been a writer with views. Whistler had held the poor fellow up to ridicule before everyone, and the Dowdeswell gallery had rung again to many a roar of laughter. To be sure, Whistler was irresistibly funny. He would take a reporter by the arm, and lead him up to a very small and dainty picture of a shop in a fantastic Whistlerian frame. Then, anticipating all criticisms and complaints, he would din them into the man's ears, repeating them one by one, until the wretch had not a leg to stand upon. He would examine the reporter's face, and looking at the picture alternately, would say, after having apparently given the subject

much thought: "It is very small, — isn't it? Very small, indeed. And if you come quite close, you can smell the varnish. That is a point, distinctly a point. It will enable you to discover that the picture is an oil colour. Don't you make any mistakes and call it a water colour. Now, this pastel, — it's very slight — isn't it? If you were only to touch it with your finger, the colour would come off." No matter how clever the reporter might be, he never got a word in edgeways.

The first Press man, a very insignificant-looking person, arrived at about half-past ten or eleven. Whistler was standing in the middle of the room surrounded by his marvellous exhibition of flesh colour and grey. The little man drifted into the gallery, and, taking Whistler for one of the attendants, asked him if he would kindly show him the way to Mr. Whistler's exhibition of pictures. He evidently imagined himself to be in the entrance to the gallery. Coming up hastily at that moment, Mr. Dowdeswell drew the little man on one side, and explained to him that this was the Master with whom he had been talking. Whistler was furious, and screamed. The critic looked as though he wished the earth might swallow him. Whistler mercilessly shouted to the attendant, "Who is this man?" with emphasis on the last word. "Mr. ——, representative of *Funny Folks*, sir," answered the commissionaire. "O, it's *Funny Folks*,

A STUDY IN ROSE AND BROWN

From an oil-painting in the possession of Messrs. Laurie and Co.

— is it?" Whistler began; but I fled from the battle-field in dismay, Whistler's eldritch laughter ringing in my ears.

If by chance a Press man were sympathetic, Whistler altered his tactics. He would say: "My dear fellow, in pointing out to these poor dear people, the public, how hopelessly wrong they are, you have a battle to fight, and a severe one. Now, I will tell exactly what you are to say in this article that you propose writing." He would then proceed to give the man word for word the whole gist of his article.

When the criticisms appeared in the papers next day, Whistler read them with relish, never missing one. It was the attacks that interested him. The praise, as Whistler himself said, was obvious: he knew it all beforehand. The reading of notices involved a series of long letters to be written, and a rush on my part to the various newspaper offices.

On his Private-view Day, Whistler was in his element. It was always more like a reception than a private view of pictures. People came there as to a drawing-room. And Whistler was admirable in the way he received his guests. Never was there a more perfect host. He seemed to be everywhere, talking to everyone at the same moment. The whole afternoon was a continuous joy. When everyone had gone, Walter Dowdeswell, Whistler, and myself, with one or two others, went to the Arts Club to dine and talk over

the events of the day. Only a few pictures had been sold; but that did not depress us in the least. We were just as buoyant, just as hopeful, as ever. And here I must mention the splendid way in which the Messrs. Dowdeswell and Mr. Ernest Brown of the Fine Arts Society fought for Whistler in those early days, when his work was misunderstood and undervalued. They believed in him always, and were ever ready to help him and save him pain. For example, over twenty sets of Whistler's etchings printed by a professional printer were brought round to the Dowdeswell galleries for him to look over. He was not satisfied with them, and had not decided whether they should be passed. I begged him to destroy the proofs and print the plates himself, and Dowdeswell without a moment's hesitation seconded my petition. And, mind you, these proofs were printed ready for publication; whereas under the Master's hands it was uncertain when they might be finished; it might be in a month's time, it might be in a year. I never forgot Dowdeswell's generosity. The Master was extraordinarily fortunate in having such men as Dowdeswell and Brown to fight his battles. They did much to help him in the earlier days of his career.

F. R. LEYLAND'S MOTHER

HOUSE DECORATION

STUDY

From a lithograph.

REFERENCE

THE TOILET

From a lithograph.

HOUSE DECORATION

WHISTLER had very strong views in connection with house decoration. He could not bear vulgarity and the foolish struggle to turn suburban villas into palaces. He abominated the pretentious dado, the converting of drawing-rooms into bric-à-brac shops, the crowding of knick-knacks, and the distribution of superfluous objects conspicuously because of their associations. He maintained that the very best medium of all for coating walls with was distemper. It was clean and easily renewed and with it one procured a finer quality of colour. Whistler were distempering a small house, his first thought would be to create a oneness in colour throughout. For example, he would never dream of introducing into an old-rose room lemon yellows, apple greens, and Antwerp blues: such a room in his opinion must be of one simple, broad colour. Whistler's method of procuring a fine quality in distemper was almost exactly the same as that which he used when painting his pictures. Before putting it upon the walls he prepared a groundwork of black and white, forming a neutral grey which broke through and gave to the colour a pearly quality. The tones that appealed to him most

for distempering rooms were lemon yellow, Antwerp blue, and apple green. But there was nothing that Whistler loved more than a plain white room. White appealed to him. He loved the silvery greys that one sees in the interior of large white rooms. I have often heard him say that the apartment which attracted him most of all in people's houses was the pantry, which had "nice whitewashed walls." The woodwork of a room he generally liked to have all white: a true white — no subtleties, no cream or ivory tones, but — a clean flake white with nothing added.

Furniture, in Whistler's opinion, should be as simple as possible and be of straight lines. He did not care for what are commonly called "comfortable chairs." He hated anything that suggested laziness in any way. Comfort never appealed to him. I could not picture Whistler sitting in an armchair by the fireside. That was not typical of him at all. The chairs in his house were dainty and upright. "If you want to be comfortable," he was wont to say, "go to bed." A piano I never saw in a house of Whistler's. The shape of it would have upset him. The walnut wood, the spiral legs, and the ornamental fretwork would have been an abomination of detail. One never saw many books about. Although he possessed a marvellously retentive memory, he never read much. I cannot imagine Whistler quietly reading a book.

The Adams and Chippendale period for furniture

AN ORANGE NOTE—SWEET SHOP

From an oil-painting in the possession of
W. Flower, Esq.

REFERENCE
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he approved most of all, and he liked anything that was genuinely Japanese. In nearly all his rooms one saw cheap Japanese jars, beautiful in colour. He never hung a picture on his walls unless it was his own. Occasionally he would hang a few of his etchings on a lemon-yellow wall, just because he liked the harmony of the old Dutch paper against the yellow. To hang them merely because of their intrinsic interest he considered inartistic. Silver attracted Whistler immensely: the colour delighted him. He bought silver with great judgment, not because it was rare, but because it was beautiful from the artistic standpoint. Lovely little pieces of early English silver found their way to Whistler's rooms, — nothing that would have been valued by the collector, but silver that was decorative in line.

When I first met Whistler he had just completed the painting of the Peacock Room belonging to Mr. Leyland, and he was full of the great quarrel he had had with that gentleman. He told me some of his experiences. He described a picture of his own — a picture of a Japanese girl, rather bright in colour, which had been hung in Leyland's dining room, a room very richly decorated with old Spanish leather. Whistler felt that the Spanish leather was not in harmony with his picture: it was too low in tone: and he longed to be alone, that he might, by a touch of colour here and there, lighten the leather and so

bring the room more in sympathy with his picture. He locked himself in, and began lightening the leather with Antwerp blue and gold. The leather rapidly became lighter and lighter, and more blue in tone, until at last Whistler told Leyland that he felt it necessary to clear the field for action, and that he might go to Speke Hall, his country house, for a month, and not come near the room until the alterations were quite completed. During that month an amazing thing happened. Whistler, together with a pupil who acted as assistant, set to work with great pails of Antwerp blue, and books upon books of gold leaf, to smother the Spanish leather all over. At moments they worked so frantically that it seemed to be raining gold. Their hair became gilded; gold settled on their faces and on their lungs; they choked, and sneezed, and could scarcely breathe. Whistler put blue paint on the walls, quite obliterating the leather; and into the paint he crammed gold, and afterward more blue, and so on, until in the end the room was one glorious shimmer of gold and blue intermingled, a very beautiful whole — in fact, a masterpiece. There were gold peacocks on a blue ground, and blue peacocks on a gold ground, and peacocks' eyes and peacocks' feathers all in gold and blue. Leyland turned up suddenly at a moment when the room was half finished and in a state of wild disorder, and insisted upon seeing it. Whistler forbade him; but Leyland

STUDY

From a lithograph.

EARLY MORNING

First state, from a lithograph.

NOCTURNE

From a lithograph.

stole in surreptitiously one day while the artists were at work. He paused on the threshold aghast. His rage knew no bounds, and he demanded of Whistler what he had done with his Spanish leather, which had cost him so many hundreds of pounds. Whistler turned his face, half covered with gold and blue paint, and surveyed Leyland critically. "Your Spanish leather," he said, "is beneath my peacocks; and an excellent ground, too, it formed to paint them on." Leyland was furious. In what sum was he indebted to Whistler for having wrecked his dining room? "A thousand guineas," promptly answered Whistler. "No," said Leyland: "I shall give you only a thousand pounds." To this Whistler made no reply, but simply stipulated that he should be allowed to finish the decoration of the room. Leyland was once more turned out; and the Master completed his operations, painting upon the last remaining wall a caricature of himself and Leyland in the form of two peacocks, one with its body smothered in golden sovereigns, and on the floor a mass of silver shillings, and the other prancing and triumphant. Thus was the story of the economy of the odd shillings recorded for all time. It was impossible for the work to be redone; and so the picture remains in the dining room to this day, to tell the story to posterity.

When Whistler's work was completed, he sent invitations to all his friends, requesting their presence

at a private view of the Peacock Room. "I should advise you, my dear fellow," he said to Leyland, "to revisit Speke Hall. These people are coming not to see you or your house: they are coming to see the work of the Master, and you, being a sensitive man, may naturally feel a little out in the cold." Leyland departed, and the guests arrived, and all admitted that they had never before seen so exquisite a room. "Ah," said Whistler to Leyland a little while afterwards, "you should be grateful to me. I have made you famous. My work will live when you are forgotten. Still, perchance, in the dim ages to come you may be remembered as the proprietor of the Peacock Room." Time has proved that Whistler was right.

The poor gentleman who had designed Leyland's dining room before the Master took it in hand was among the guests at the private view. He had had an idea that his own creation was a masterpiece, and the shock of seeing all his labour undone was so terrible that from that moment his head was completely turned.

When Whistler heard of the pathetic ending of the Spanish-leather gentleman, he smiled, and said, "To be sure, that is the effect I have upon people."

THE CURÉ'S LITTLE CLASS

From an oil-painting in the possession of
J. J. Cowan, Esq.

TRAVELS

STUDY

From a lithograph.

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

TRAVELS

Once we went to St. Ives in connection with a series of pictures for an exhibition that Whistler was to hold in Bond Street. There were three of us, — the Master, myself, and another follower, — and we took apartments in a little lodging-house kept by an old lady. Very small and very humble rooms they were, no doubt; but many and charming are the memories that cling to them. Lodging-house or palace, it was all the same. The presence of the Master acted as a charm; and to us enthusiastic admirers it mattered not that the chairs were of horsehair and the ornaments aggressive, while the accommodation was very scant. Whistler himself loved St. Ives. The boats, the sea, the fishermen — all fascinated him. He did not like the country for itself alone: pictorially, trees and farms and pasture lands had no attraction for him. But St. Ives he revelled in, and he did much fine work there. Whistler was ever an enthusiastic worker; but away from town there was no keeping pace with him. He rose at cockcrow, and seemed to be always full of the most untiring energy. By the time the first glimpse of dawn had shown itself in the sky, he would be up and

dressed and pacing very impatiently along the corridor, screaming reproaches, instructions, taunts, and commands, all in a breath, at the somnolent followers. "Have you got my panels prepared?" — "Did you mix that grey tone and put in the tube?" — "Menpes, have you brought any of those note-books with Dutch paper in them?" — "Pshaw! why aren't you all up?" — "Walter, you are in a condition of drivel. There you are, sleeping away your very life! What's it all about?" — "Menpes, is this the sort of life you live in the bush? When I saw you in your knickerbockers yesterday, I thought you were going to be active and give us a touch of bush life." He would continue hurling taunt after taunt at our heads until he had got us up and dressed and in the dining room. There we would find Whistler dainty, sparkling, — one might almost say gemlike, — and ready for a day of incident. I can see him now as he stood there, that dapper figure no longer in the long flowing skirts of town, but in a very short jaunty jacket — almost a tomtit scheme, a straw hat cocked completely over the right eye, and dancing shoes on his feet. His hair was well groomed, and he wore a pleased smile. He had aroused us probably at six o'clock. By dint of much careful manipulation of the landlady, breakfast was ready by half-past, and Whistler was content. Our meal consisted chiefly of coffee, bacon and eggs, and perhaps fish. Whistler would

PORTRAIT STUDIES

From a dry point by Mortimer Menpes.

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survey the table critically, and then begin an elaborate description of how food ought to be cooked. A lengthy lecture was afterwards given on the scientific cutting of bread, Walter and I gazing voraciously the while on the rapidly solidifying bacon, and mentally speculating on the lowering temperature of the coffee. Whistler was a master of detail: nothing escaped him: consequently, at these breakfasts there was much for him to do. Neither did he hurry over things: the putting of a fine edge on the bread knife in itself occupied some time. At length, however, we began our breakfast, and for a time there was silence. Nothing was said. Suddenly the Master would frown. Our horizon became darkened on the instant. Breakfast no longer had attractions. The world was a blank. The Master was troubled.

We no doubt looked our sympathy, and by and by Whistler told us the reason of his preoccupation. It had suddenly occurred to him that the landlady somehow was in a way neglecting us. She had not realised our position, or rather the position of the Master: she had not yet, as he himself picturesquely put it, "placed us." Thus, the bell was rung, and after a short interval the unwitting landlady appeared, somewhat blown after the fatigue of bringing her rather rotund person up the staircase, and scared at the sudden call. Whistler was very dignified, and a trifle severe. "Now," he said, "can you tell me

something about the dinner to-night, and the coffee after the dinner? For, you know, it is the habit of gentlemen," — now the stout old lady was quaking and nervously shaking her head, — "it is their habit to take coffee after dinner. Well, we gentlemen" — with a comprehensive wave of the hand towards Walter and myself — "find ourselves here in St. Ives, and it has occurred to me that it would perhaps be wise of you to turn your attention to this little matter of the coffee. It is not to be a large breakfast cup, mark you, of coarse porcelain, but a small, dainty cup of coffee. Madam, do you think you can do this?" The old lady, thoroughly demoralised by Whistler's flow of language, mumbled something in answer, and left the room as hastily as possible. "Now," said Whistler, "I think she realises better our position, and that we have certain habits of what is fit and proper."

After breakfast the Master would saunter out into the open with his long cane and his little pochade box, which last it was my duty to have always scrupulously cleaned and ready for his use, and make sketches of anything that appealed to him on the way. We used often to meet when sketching what we called "outside" artists, to whom Whistler was a continual source of wonder, and I often overheard their remarks. They could not understand him at all. "The man must be idling," they said. "How can one work

PORTRAIT STUDY

From a dry point by Mortimer Menpes.

in earnest sitting on a borrowed chair and with nothing but a small pochade box and a grey-tinted panel? Real hard work necessitates a great canvas and easel, large brushes, and at least a sketching umbrella."

It was just about this time that Whistler had a grievance; it was only a small one, but it worried him. The trouble began on the very first day of our arrival at St. Ives. It was all Walter's fault. He had once been an actor touring in the provinces, and had performed in St. Ives several times. During his visits there he had put on a jersey and top-boots, and had completely won over the fishermen, fascinating them with his kindly bonhomie. Now on going back to St. Ives he was received more or less as a friend, a "pal." To show their devotion, the fishermen would often make him presents of fish; these Walter brought home to the landlady, and they were cooked and eaten. Now, this particular old lady did not know anything about art and pictures; but she was very much impressed by this fascinating young man, and his still more fascinating presents of fish. She was enabled to procure fish every day for nothing, and her heart was completely won. All this annoyed the Master exceedingly. He was obviously much upset. On the second morning of our visit he drew me on one side, and demanded to know how Walter got his fish. I explained that he had been in a company of players,

and had visited St. Ives before. Whistler interrupted imperatively. "Yes; but why don't they give me fish? It is the Master who should receive these gifts."

The "fish follower" almost invariably went off by himself painting pictures, sometimes five and six a day, talking to the fishermen as he worked, for he really loved them. The Master and I generally found ourselves alone, and I used to watch him for hours as he worked. Sometimes he allowed me to sketch the same subject. Often he, too, would talk to the fishermen, and it was interesting to see Whistler copying the tactics of the follower, talking of sea and boats, and gracefully playing round the subject of fish; but somehow or other the St. Ives fisher folk never gave him fish, and Whistler was far too proud to ask. "It must be given," he would say, "of their own free will." What marvellous finesse, and tact, and cunning, and humour, I have heard wasted on those coarse fishermen! What veiled entreaties and flatteries! Yet never a mackerel did his fluency bring forth, never a sprat. Many a time I have felt sorry for the Master as he turned away fishless and discontented.

One day Whistler was out painting a shop; it was a fish shop with a blue band, one of the best things he ever painted. I remember the shop well, because I was bold enough to paint the same one at the same time, standing about twenty yards away from him. Suddenly I heard a puffing and a blowing, and look-

THE LITTLE NURSE

From an oil-painting in the possession of
J. J. Cowan, Esq.

ing up I saw two men coming toward us carrying, suspended from a couple of poles, an enormous fish, a great flat, brown, coarse-looking fish about the size of a dining-room table. Whistler saw it, too, and, remembering the actor-painter, was inspired to buy the creature for the landlady. He felt that it would outdo in size, if not in quality, anything that Walter had yet procured. "Hey, men, what have you got there?" he shouted. "How much for the fish? I'll give you half a crown."—"Right you are, guv'nor," said the men, and they promptly laid the fish down on the ground, pocketed the money, and went off with the poles and the rope. Whistler was paralysed. There was no time to think, his purchase was so sudden. As for me, I did not dare leave my seat for fear I should collapse: the situation was too comic for my sense of humour. There was the Master circling round and round this enormous flat fish, daintily probing it with his cane, lifting up portions of the outer edge, striking it, trying to peep underneath it: evidently he was endeavouring to discover which way up it was, for the creature looked the same all round. This went on for about ten minutes, Whistler continually calling me to come. I dared not approach: I was convulsed with laughter. At last he shouted, imperatively, "Menpes, come here! come here!" I steadied myself and got up the best way I could. Of course, I knew that his object was to take the fish

home and impress the landlady. I asked him what he was doing. "Which, Menpes," he said,—"which should you imagine was his chest?" It was impossible to tell. I went back to my work, and Whistler to his; and we left the fish on the pavement, never referring to the subject again.

However, Whistler did not quite give up his idea of winning over the fishermen of St. Ives. Many a time, as we strolled along the beach, he stopped and talked with the men. One day he was out painting on the sands, and, seeing a fisherman mending his nets, the Master, still with the fish scheme on his mind, took the opportunity of explaining to him the beauties of the scene upon which he was working. "Ah, yes," said the fisherman, as he paused in his work: "I know all about that sort of thing. There was a great painter down here once; he did a sketch of me, and after it was finished he gave it to me."—"Well, and do you value it much?" asked Whistler, looking up. "O, yes," said the man. "You see, sir, he was a great artist in London, a member of the Academy." This piece of information had not the astounding effect upon his hearer that the fisherman had intended; and Whistler, feeling considerably damaged in his ardour, went on to put questions about the life this painter led at St. Ives. The natural enthusiasm of the fisherman's answers depressed him still more. He said to me afterwards, as we

PORTRAIT STUDIES

From a dry point by Mortimer Menpes.

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were walking home, "Just think: this fisherman talks to me, the Master, enthusiastically about a man whose work can never live!"

Whistler never forgot this little incident. Neither did I; for it touched me deeply to think that one so great should take such infinite pains in cultivating the admiration of simple fishermen, and, on failing, should fret over it, as the Master undoubtedly did.

I always look back upon those days at St. Ives with joy. They were a simple and happy time. We were not always working. Often we spent a day upon the rocks, fishing; and it was delightful to see the little dainty dapper figure of Whistler, among the somewhat coarse tourists and burly fishermen, spring about from rock to rock with the agility and lightness of a deer hound, a frail-looking figure, yet withal sinewy, tough, and muscular. Beside him most other men appeared to be so many clodhoppers. Whistler, whether indoors or out, on the rocks or on the high-roads, always wore the lightest of patent-leather pumps with bows upon them. Yet he was ever ready for walks in the country. I remember him saying once, "How much more suitable those slight delicate shoes are for walking in and for climbing about on rocks than the heavy, hobnailed boots of the average Englishman. I, in my slight dancing shoes, make far greater progress than they." These pumps of Whistler's had square toes: he always wore square-

toed boots, because, as he said, he found the lines of them far more decorative.

One day while we were at St. Ives I drifted off alone, and during the course of the morning found myself in an old parish church, — an old church of the Jesuits. I discovered on a board some writing which, I should think, scarcely any other visitor had noticed; to the villagers, although many a time they must have seen it, it would probably mean nothing. It was an old record of an address from Charles I, who was staying at Oxford Castle then, at the beginning of the great civil war. I had happened upon this by accident, and it impressed me very much; for I realised then as I never had before how these old parish churches of ours buried away beneath the green trees close by the sounding ocean are veritable storehouses of the history of the British nation. This was all sentimental, and when I returned to the Whistlerian atmosphere my enthusiasm was so keen that I actually began to tell Whistler of the experience. He gazed at me for a moment in amazement, and then, shaking his head, said sadly: "O Menpes, I can see that for you there is only one end. You will develop into a minor poet. We are here at St. Ives to study; to paint shops and seas and skies: we don't want sickly sentiment. Leave that to the minor poet by all means, Menpes." I suppose he was right.

It was through Mr. Chase, president of the New

PORTRAIT STUDIES

From a dry point by Mortimer Menpes.

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York League, that Whistler next left London. This time it was to Brussels that we journeyed. Chase had come over to England for the purpose of being painted by Whistler. The portrait, I think, was never quite completed, although the Master worked upon it for some weeks. Chase himself was an artist, and a great and genuine admirer of Whistler's work. He was most anxious for the Master to go with him to Brussels, to see a big show of the work of Stevens at the International Exhibition. Chase admired Stevens immensely, and he wanted Whistler's interest and appreciation of his work. But Whistler was perverse. He was in one of his peevish moods, and declared that he didn't want to go to Brussels: in fact, he decided that he wouldn't go at all unless I went with him. The end of it was that I received my orders at the last moment, and was given two hours in which to fly home, gather my luggage together, and present myself at Paddington Station. Shall I ever forget that journey? What a fiasco! The whole plan was wrong from beginning to end. Whistler really didn't want to go to Brussels; he was overpersuaded by Mr. Chase; and the consequence was that he was in a "naughty humour." I knew those humours well. At the station he created a tremendous excitement. The platform was crowded at the last moment with special messengers and telegraph boys, who were despatched in all directions at

Whistler's command. I never have had such a journey before or since. It was full of incident. Directly the Master set his foot on board the channel steamer, everyone was working for him. He made them all interested, — stewards, sailors, captain, passengers, — everyone! To begin with, when he crossed the gangway he saw the captain looking through a telescope; there was something consequential about his air that Whistler did not like, and he stood on the deck looking searchingly from the captain to the compass and back again for about five minutes. At last his gaze became so pointed that the people began to gather round, and the wretched captain was forced to say something. So he exclaimed, "What the deuce are you looking at?" That started Whistler; it was his opportunity, and he seized upon it. All day he had been searching for some object upon which to vent his spleen, and at last he had found it in the person of the captain. He stood there and talked for about half an hour, — brilliantly, caustically, stingingly. He wiped the deck with that captain before the whole ship's company, and left him nothing but a pulp, with only his gold lace and brass buttons to distinguish him from the humblest galley slave.

Down in the saloon also things went wrong. Whistler disliked travelling at that particular moment, and everyone else was made to dislike it. The stewards waited on him badly, he said; the food was

PORTRAIT STUDIES

From a dry point by Mortimer Menpes.

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atrocious; there were too many passengers; and so things grew up and up until he was in a fury. Bed-time came. I had been meditating on this agony throughout the journey, and found that I had not overrated it. The Master had to sleep in a four-berth cabin which was full, and Whistler occupied an upper berth. I knew directly I saw that cabin-load that there was going to be trouble. Chase had already turned in; but Whistler made me wait until he was settled before I retired to my own quarters next door. I had left him no longer than ten minutes when he screamed out to me, "Menpes! Menpes!" I got up and opened the door. "Menpes," said Whistler, "there is a fat, fair person in here occupying the whole of the floor!" I looked down, and saw a poor old gentleman disrobing; he certainly was occupying a good deal of space. He was extremely stout. After a few minutes' conversation I extorted from him a promise that he would retire in half an hour, and left Whistler somewhat pacified. I imagined that things would now go well; but it was not to be. Later in the night, when everyone had dropped off into sleep save Whistler, the door began to bang. He had left it open for fresh air, and had forgotten to hook it. It was a mild night; but there was just enough movement to cause the ship to sway from side to side, and the door every now and then went bang — bang — bang — bang! This very

soon got on Whistler's nerves; but he had turned in, and did not wish to turn out again. So he gripped his cane, which he always kept by him, and began to probe into the darkness beneath. The cane came in contact with something solid. It was the fat man. After a good deal of probing, he awoke. Whistler put on his eyeglass, and peered over the side of the bunk. "Did you hear that?" he asked in a mysterious tone of voice. "There it goes again — flip — flap!" Very soon he had awakened all the occupants of the cabin, that they might hear the noise. "Yes," mumbled the fat man sleepily: "that's the door." — "You are perfectly right," said Whistler: "it is the door; but what is going to happen? That's what I want to know." The stout gentleman, now thoroughly awakened, warmed to his task, and began to explain that he thought it must be the door, which, being unlatched, was allowed to swing, and that what it really needed was to be fastened. "Well," said Whistler, "since you seem to have thoroughly grasped the situation, perhaps it would be as well if you got up and saw to matters." In the end the poor old gentleman was made to get out of bed and fasten the door. And so it continued the whole night long. There were incidents throughout the voyage.

Next morning I scented trouble, and took up a position on a camp stool a little way from the door.

WHISTLER AND MENPES

From photographs.

It was interesting to watch the different people coming out of the cabin. It was only too apparent by the expression on their faces that they suffered. I warrant that none of those men had slept a wink. The stout gentleman emerged in rather a hurry, as though propelled against his will by some hidden force in the rear; he was muttering to himself, "I never heard such a thing in my life! — simply scandalous!" and shaking his fists. He passed me rapidly and disappeared down the companionway. Shortly after a short, dark man, rather stout, emerged; he flew past, evidently bound for the captain's cabin. Then, last but by no means least, out stepped Whistler, looking as fresh as a daisy, sparkling and dainty, his cane lightly poised between his finger and thumb. "Ha! ha! Menpes!" he said; "and how are things going with you?" He had slept well, he told me, and had enjoyed the night thoroughly, especially as the cabin had been cleared so early of its occupants.

We put up at an hotel when we arrived in Brussels, and there, too, we had trouble. At the very first meal we had, which was dinner, Whistler disapproved the way the coffee was served. He had the head waiter brought before him, and then the proprietor, and delivered a lengthy harangue on the folly of treating carelessly people so important as ourselves and serving them in so unceremonious a fashion. Thenceforward Chase and I were not to drink coffee

at that hotel on any pretence whatever. And I remember it seemed to occupy us rather — this craving for coffee. We used mildly to suggest coffee sometimes to Whistler in the hope that he would relax. "No: certainly not," the Master would answer sternly. "If you want coffee, you must go elsewhere." All this was slowly but surely beginning to tell on Chase's nerves. He was a finely-strung man, and was becoming worn out. Still, he was buoyed up considerably by the thought of Whistler's enthusiasm over the pictures we had come to see.

Early next morning we started off to the International Exhibition. Whistler was still fractious. We were shown the room where the pictures of Stevens hung, and Chase took Whistler enthusiastically up to them. The Master had worked himself into a certain groove of contrariness, and felt that he could not at that moment look at things from Chase's standpoint. It was his whim to regard these pictures purely as literature. Chase would say, "Look at the marvellous colour and the exquisite drawing of that woman's head." Whistler would half close his eyes, with his head on one side, place his hand on his hip, and say, "Well, well, well! Pshaw! Think of that now! Go on, Menpes: you look at that picture over there." (That would perhaps be a very fair picture: I was then going through a craze of keying up my pictures almost to whiteness, and, I must admit, blankness.)

A NOCTURNE

From an oil-painting in the possession of
J. J. Cowan, Esq.

"That's the one for you. I am looking at this picture with Chase. Now, Chase, what do you suppose would happen if the ball of worsted were to fall from off the lady's lap?" The natural conclusion we arrived at was that the cat would spring at the ball. It would scarcely be natural of her to resist it. And so he would continue "rotting" the whole exhibition, becoming more and more frivolous in his remarks with each picture.

At last this so got on Chase's nerves that he flew out of the gallery, and went to bed, ill; and there we left him to recover while we went on to Holland.

Before leaving, however, Whistler and I went once more to the International Exhibition. Whistler strolled about still in the same unsettled state, until suddenly, as luck would have it, he came across two large frames of etchings, — one by Walter Sickert and the other by myself. I shall never forget the terror of that moment. I believe my hair all but stood on end. Walter and I had sent those frames off unknown to the Master, and I had for the time completely forgotten them. Whistler put on his eyeglass, and looked from me to the frame and back again; and for the time was speechless. Then at last he shrieked out, white with rage, "How dare you?"

Chase from that moment faded into the background of his mind. He had now another grievance. For days he never ceased to talk of this thing that I

had done. I had sent a frame to the Exhibition without his knowledge. I had deceived him. "Why have you kept this from the Master?" he demanded. "What excuse can you find for yourself? I have left my work in London simply to come here for a whim of yours and Mr. Chase's. Do you realise that you have been behaving badly? Do you realise that I lifted you more or less out of the gutter, artistically? I found you in absolute degradation, studying under E. J. Poynter at the Kensington Schools; and what did I do? Saved you; cleansed you; allowed you the intimacy of my studio. I even made a pupil of you, my favourite pupil. More than that, I made a friend of you: I gave you my friendship. Now, don't you feel ashamed of yourself?" I was speechless. I felt that I had indeed disgraced myself for ever. I had neglected the Master. There seemed no longer any excuse for my life.

The scolding went on and on as we pursued our journey, and I became rapidly more and more wretched, until matters came to a head in Holland. We were sitting in a little beer garden; I remember it well; there were comic songs going on. I can recall the refrain of one of the songs now; it seemed to beat itself into my brain; it was at a moment when I felt that I could stand the strain no longer. I said not a word; but suddenly the whole trouble exploded. Whistler spoke to me in the same old friendly way;

WHISTLER, CHASE, AND MENPES

From a photograph. Whistler with the curly- and Chase with the straight-brimmed hat.

and I knew that the agony was over, never to be referred to again. For Whistler, when he forgave you at all, forgave completely. All was happiness and sunshine.

That little quarrel in Holland endeared me all the more to the Master. I felt deeply what a great privilege it was to be his friend and pupil.

Next day we had a long and delightful hunt for old Dutch paper. Greatly to our joy, we discovered a magnificent collection. Whistler was almost like a schoolboy in his delight over this find. We went halves in the buying of it, and purchased many thousands of sheets.

THE END

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ANNEXE

WITHDRAWN

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